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MAURICE ELVINGTON.

VOLUME I.

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MAURICE ELVINGTON;

OR,

ONE OUT OF SUITS WITH FORTUNE.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

EDITED BY WILFRID EAST.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE narrative contained in the ensuing chapters was placed in my hands by an old College Friend, with whom I renewed my acquaintance—by mere accident—after we had lost sight of each other for fifteen years.

The first occasion on which I met Mr Elvington was in the rooms of a third party, and for the next three years there was a great intimacy between us, not only when crossing the Great Court of T. C. C. together, bound to Chapel, Hall, or Lectures, but on other occasions and during the Vacations. I have therefore acceded to his request to see his

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manuscript through the press, during a prolonged, and perhaps final, absence of the Author from his own country.

Mr Elvington quitted England before his narrative was quite brought to a conclusion—indeed the last five or six chapters were forwarded by him to this country by the mail—so that the task of introducing it to the public has also fallen upon the shoulders of the present Editor.

W. E.

REGENT'S PARK,

January, 1856.

MAURICE ELVINGTON.

INTRODUCTION.

WHY do I commit these pages to the Press? Would it not be better to lock them up in the drawers of some book-case or secretary, and ponder over them alone? To expose one's passions and frailties to the glare of day—to go as it were into the market-place and full concourse of my fellow-creatures, and call them out into the ears of a public just hurrying through it, each man busied on his own daily cares and bargains—is this judicious? is it delicate? Is it not some breach of the confidence in which every one has sworn to himself to preserve his own secrets?

This modesty—or shame, or self-respect, or all, are in my case mastered by a stronger feeling. I have kept company with my own thoughts too long : I must speak out—I must have sympathy. Laugh with me, weep with me, reprove me if you will, but let me hear the voice of my fellow-creatures telling me once more that I am a denizen in their actual world of joys and sorrows, and I will go away contented.

But let my readers accept this narrative from my hands in the spirit in which it is offered to them. It takes its hue and complexion from the varying moods, the lights and shadows, playing over the mind of the writer, as he recalls old times to his memory, and notes them down with a free pen. It is no elaborate fiction, written solely to amuse.

What to me is praise or blame now ?—The memories of the dead rise before me : I hear their voices—they are speaking to me—they tell me that there was a time when I was desirous of some slight literary notice ; but that it is has long since taken its flight.—The ears to which the voice of praise

would have discoursed the most excellent music, because the garland was to be lifted on to the head of one they loved and respected, are dull now. Their eyes can no longer meet mine if they dance and sparkle with the joy of success.

CHAPTER I.

IT was some time in the pleasant thirties, I believe in the year thirty-seven, that I, Maurice Elvington by name, found myself seated in my apartments in Suffolk Street, thinking of nothing less than that I should ever undergo any vicissitudes of fortune, and thus be enabled to roll my experience of life into a history worthy of your perusal. If I remember rightly I was sauntering over my breakfast, and just asking myself the serious question, how I was to get through a confoundedly long day? I might hunt up a studious friend, who kept to his rooms too much; or attend an auction of the books of a gentleman deceased; or buy a concert-ticket; or do anything else that required the mere mechan-



ical effort of opening the street-door and putting my hand into my pocket. The train of my meditations, such as they were, became just then broken by the entrance of the quiet young gentleman in plain clothes who condescended to act as the Mercury of my landlord the wine merchant, wait upon the inmates of his establishment, and, by the studied civility or incivility of his carriage, reveal to them, like a weather-glass, what atmosphere of worldly opinion they were living in, and whether they were profitable or not to the master of the house.

We are all a good deal flattered by the respect vouchsafed to us by another person's servants, and mortified if the flunkies do not, in some degree, patronize us; but, of course, we are ashamed of the feeling and conceal it. This the wine merchant and his factotum, who were both accomplished knaves in their small way, knew well, and if they once got a weak-minded good young man into their man-trap, they trampled upon him, until he turned reckless at being made of so little account, and gave extensive

wine parties, or betted on all kinds of shy horses, merely to wring a smile from his two tormentors : and when they once pitched him over the edge of the inclined plane in this fashion, they bowled him down the road to ruin in no time.

I never came up to their abstract idea of an inmate of such a respectable establishment. I was seven and twenty years of age ; possessed at that time of my life a cool temper ; had as much experience of knavery as the fact of having been pretty well fleeced by the respected authorities of a large college could give the sufferer, and was, as I have always been, as obstinate a mule as any going. The wine merchant soon found this out, and therefore tried hard to get rid of his unprofitable inmate ; but the said inmate chose to be delighted with the apartments and attendance, because he did not choose to understand anything short of a legal ejectment, and on one occasion, when the good man was particularly uncivil, told him : “ My good sir, I dote on the very walls and window-frames of my rooms, and shall make them my home for the rest of my

bachelor-days." In the sequel, the old rogue grew very savage, and this was just the effect I wanted to produce on his temper.

But to return from this little digression. My landlord's deputy, as I observed, broke the chain of my meditations, firstly, by coming into the room at all, and in the second place by handing me a letter, with that very innocent expression of face which tells one that the person assuming it has been loitering on the stairs and behind corners, trying to purloin the contents without crumpling the envelope, until at last he has condescended to let the rightful owner have his own lawful property. Of this patent fact, however, I took no notice, but just glanced at the address of the letter, sent the fellow out of the room, glanced at the letter again, and then put it aside with an impatient "pish!" I saw it came from a man of business, and business of any kind was my detestation. There is also a kind of presentiment which comes across one at times—a feeling to which our German cousins would give some very fine name,

besides writing half a volume about it on the spot—but which I shall just take the liberty of styling an odd notion, that, somehow or other, you are on the top of the stairs, and are going to tumble down to the bottom. Be this as it may, there rested the letter on the breakfast-table, as it were daring one to read it, whilst the writer of this autobiography eyed it askance, requesting a personage of bad name and reputation to read it in his stead, and the letter declaring that it had no intention of walking into the box again, and so on. At last I really mustered courage to break the seal, and of course after I had done so, called myself a fool for being frightened before I was hurt. The communication, which, as I suspected, was from a man of business, did not in plain terms ask me to put my head on the block, or jump off London Bridge, but respectfully requested an interview between myself and the writer. It came from a gentleman learned in the law, who acted as the solicitor of my deceased uncle and guardian, Sir William Maurice, and ran as follows:—

Bedford Row, 27th May 1837.

DEAR SIR,—I write to inform you that I should feel very much obliged by your favouring me with an interview at your earliest convenience. If you have no better engagement, can you give me a call to-morrow afternoon about three o'clock, or make some other appointment with, dear Sir, yours very truly,

ROBERT SLOPER GENTLY.

MAURICE ELVINGTON, Esq.,
Suffolk Street, Pall Mall.

Mr Gently had long acted not only as the solicitor but also as the confidential adviser of my deceased uncle, and was a most respectable gentleman in his way. During my minority I had received through his hands the very liberal allowance made to me by Sir William, and after my coming of age had allowed him to retain the management of my own affairs; for I was too indolent to attend to them myself. My poor uncle had taken his last look of this world about six months previously, and I had learned from Mr Gently, whom I had

seen several times on the subject, that he had made his will in my favour, and I should inherit whatever part of his fortune did not pass over to his second cousin, the present Sir Anthony Maurice.

I drew then from the solicitor's letter the no very pleasant inference that the time had arrived when I really must, to a certain extent, take the management of my own affairs upon my shoulders, and no longer content myself with the mere possession of property, while I shirked all its duties and obligations. Here was a pleasant prospect for the truly careless nephew of an insouciant uncle. Sir William's family had first given me, through my mother, no small portion of the idle blood in their veins, and my uncle had now left me heir to his own petty vexations: for of vexations idle men always have their hands full. I knew there was a little country box somewhere, to which I must now run down. It had never been inhabited or looked to for years, and probably all the windows were out, the statues with their heads knocked off, the chimneys stuffed up with martins' nests, the lodge made pleasant for

the habitation of the park-keeper by having the roof off; in fact, the whole place a scene of disgraceful ruin. Then there were farms—my own property—to be leased out, the rents collected, the bumpkins who held them to be conciliated by draining, building barns, recovering rights of way, and a thousand other little agreeable expenses; and their pleasant spouses to be coaxed by tasting their cheese, patting their boys on the head, and kissing their daughters. Perhaps the government might seize upon me for high sheriff by force, or the gentry put me up for the county by violence. Here was a pleasant prospect for a sedentary gentleman of seven-and-twenty, who cared for none of the pomps and vanities of this world, and only asked to be allowed to elbow his way through the mob of his fellow-creatures, without having his pocket picked or the breath taken out of his body while squeezed against some great man's area railings.

However, what little good sense I possessed at the bottom told me that mere procrastination would be of no earthly use, and that I must face the man

of law, and hear what he had to communicate to me. As the day appeared fine, and it was then only about twelve o'clock, I had no need to dive into the dirty disagreeable city at once, and I said to myself, "Maurice Elvington, my excellent young friend, you shall be recompensed for going there at all." I determined then first to look round in St James' Street, where there was a picture by Sasso Ferrato on sale. I was not rich enough to give several hundred pounds for a picture, which, after all, might be a long way after the original master, but I liked to know what was going on in the fine arts, and to see the last new importation.

This important business finished, then—and it would wear away an hour—I would dive down to the Temple, and unearth an old college friend who was burrowing in "a small chamber," as Roger North calls it, and devoting his time and energies to the study of the common law of this realm. He was a good fellow in all respects, as industrious as a bee, and as poor as a rake; so the attorneys had found a diligent man out, and were beginning

to knock at his door. After I had intruded upon this friend, then, and done my best, by talking nonsense to him, to call his mind away from his profession, I would condescend to keep Mr Gently's appointment, and hear what he really had to say to me.

I daresay my reader cares wonderfully little about the paintings of Sasso Ferrato, and less concerning the conversation of two young men of no extraordinary abilities. I will imagine, then, that he is taking hold of my arm and walking about the streets with me, while I am performing my rather circuitous peregrination to the office of the worthy solicitor. If he will do so, I will relate to him, as we walk on, a few particulars concerning my birth, parentage, and education; and after he is acquainted with them, he will perhaps be the better enabled to understand the subsequent pages.

CHAPTER II.

ANY one who opens the Court Guide will find a hundred names in its columns which have a less aristocratic sound than my own patronymic of Elvington, and could I really claim descent on my father's side from any leader of that horde of landless men—the sweepings of Europe—who marched with William the Conqueror into this fertile island and seized “material guarantees” from the unhappy Saxons, I should only be too happy to do so. But I have the terrible misfortune to be of the lineage of these same Saxons, and to claim a plebeian for my grandfather. This may perhaps in some measure account for the ill success of my career in life, for it is really useless

for any man to endeavour to exist in England out of the beaten paths of commerce, unless he has either some of the ruling foreign blood in his veins, or has been kicked about the house of a great nobleman as the family tutor, or, thirdly, is the child of a favourite lady's maid, or, lastly and leastly, happens to be a person of gigantic energy and abilities.

The first ancestor I am able to record is my great-grandfather Elvington, the son of a yeoman near Cartmel in Lancashire, who subsequently moved into the West Riding, hired a water-mill, and devoted himself to the useful but then lowly occupation of watchet weaving. When he died he left two children, my grandfather John Elvington, and a daughter Martha. John Elvington lived contentedly at the paternal mill, and gained immortal honour in his race and day by being the first manufacturer who put up a steam engine, and introduced the factory system into those parts. He seems to have had a spice of the old yeoman stock in him, for he was a sturdy fellow, and a dissenter by creed. Radicals in those days

there were none. Men had not been abused and taunted into making unpleasant inquiries into the right of the upper classes to ride upon their shoulders—that good work was left for the Eldon and Castlereagh Tories—and, moreover, the manufacturers were too much occupied with the task of rooting up felons from the jails, and purloining children out of the workhouses, in order to set them to work in their mills, to have leisure or inclination to become keen politicians; still some of them were what is now styled liberals, and of these liberals my grandfather was at that time the leader in his district.

John Elvington stood by the colonists during the American war, had been an intimate friend of Benjamin Franklin when that plain republican was in England, and had a kind of acquaintance with Priestley, whom he consulted on certain experiments he was making on the dyeing of his own damasks. He was a man of plain education and some reading, and I recollect that our family library—which disappeared during my minority, because my uncle really did not know what to do

with it, and therefore sold it off—contained a collection which did credit to his judgment. Burke's speeches were there in long grim pamphlets, the works of Adam Smith and De Lolme. There was also a long array of dry and stern divinity—Jonathan Edwards, Toplady, Newton, and the rest of the class, curiously flanked by the works of Rousseau in some twenty little volumes. However, the whole generation of this political and theological literature, with the exception of Burke, who lingered on in his reflections on the regicide Peace and letter to the Duke of Bedford, was cut short about the period of the French revolution, and a line of decorous vapid authors—mighty champions of church and king in their day—took up the succession; for at the period I have mentioned, my grandfather Elvington underwent a change of opinion.

Like many moderate and wealthy men of that period, my grandfather was startled in the decline of his life by beholding opinions which he had held in the quiet of his own study, carried out beyond their legitimate consequences, and was stunned by the

roar of democracy which thundered in his ears. He had admitted the "rights of man" as an abstract postulate easily enough, especially as illustrated by his decorous friend Franklin, but was not quite prepared to hear them preached to millions of ignorant and infuriate peasants, who worked them out by the guillotine. Then, too, these same rights of man, instead of remaining confined to the heads of a few decorous gentlemen, who declaimed about them over a friendly pipe and swore at the landlord and waiters as much as they pleased, had now got into the noddles of the troublesome lads who worked at his own mill and those of his neighbours; and as these worthy men had always kept a light hand over their people, they did not understand all this riot about rights on the servant's side and duties on that of the master, but altogether began to hate the very word, and vote "the rights of man" a thorough nuisance.

My grandfather and his neighbours all changed their opinions at the same period, boxed the compass for a bit, and finally stood up for King George, poor

Mr Pitt (who has fathered the bigotry of a whole generation without being the parent of one twentieth part of it), and the "just and necessary war." He even went so far as to desert the religious opinions in which he had been brought up, conform to the Establishment, and make the acquaintance of a dignitary of the church, who obtained great influence over him and advised him to send his only son to Oxford.

Now, on any other young man brought up in the bosom of nonconformity, this startling change from the conventicle to the university might have had no beneficial effect: indeed it might have unsettled his opinions for the rest of his life; but my father Benjamin Franklin Elvington (who, by the way, could not be re-christened), was one of those gentlemanly young fellows who think it better to get through life without having any decided opinions at all, and take up any line of thinking which reputable people mark out for them. When, then, the Dean had satisfied himself that young Mr Elvington had scraped together the little Latin and less

Greek required in those days at a university, and could expend a certain sum per annum in a stock of fine old crusted port, which the fellows of colleges sixty years since did not disdain to drink in an undergraduate's rooms; that he could also pay a private tutor, who would not dream of teaching him anything, a few hundreds, when the learned gentleman had lost upon running horses and wanted ready cash, and was, above all, quite ready to throw up his cap and yell like a maniac when some Jacobin master of arts was deprived of his degree; the great man declared himself much gratified with my father's accomplishments, and entered him of his own college Christchurch; and so to Oxford the godson of Benjamin Franklin wended his way.

When my father settled down in his college, he soon found out the advantage of possessing a malleable character, for he fell into the habits of Oxford at one plunge: he swallowed everything—the dean, the dons, the scouts, the chapels—and made the best of his position; trying to grind as little as possible, and to enjoy himself as much as a

feeble constitution would allow him to do. He was no match for the robust set of young fellows who came up with him, and therefore became from necessity a quiet man, and took to elegant pursuits. He had a turn for antiquities, and was at some pains to cast up those of his own university, from Anthony Wood and other musty folios.

There happened to be at that time a small club in the college, which met in the rooms of Sir William Maurice, a young baronet, my father's senior in standing by one year, and the son of a deceased ambassador at Florence. They called themselves the Antiquarians, and pursued researches of a nature congenial to those of my father, although not quite of such a black-letter description. Young Sir William their founder was the son of a very intellectual man, and having been brought up in Italy had imbibed refined tastes and pursuits: indeed they became the passion of his life, if such a careless indolent man can be said to have had a passion. He therefore left Horace to those who intended to quote it in the House, and Greek, port

wine, and rabid toryism to sucking clergymen who looked to become heads of houses at the least, and devoted himself to his own elegant studies. He corresponded with Gavin Hamilton, who let him have a bust when he had no better customer for it, collected prints, and passed his judgment upon a picture. He took an undergraduate's pride in the club of which he was the founder, and recruited it with any clever freshman who crossed his path. Altogether Sir William Maurice was a young man of great promise, who might have been anything he liked ; but as he preferred being nothing at all, the world never heard of him.

Sir William at first took a great dislike to my father, having heard that he was the son of a manufacturer, and considering that such a person had no right to show his face at Christchurch : in those days as exclusive a place as you please. He was also influenced, as he told me afterwards, by the freshman's unlucky patronymic of Benjamin. " Only fancy, Maurice," said he to me one day, " a poor fellow coming up to Christchurch, taking good

rooms, and then confessing that he was only a Benjamin after all." When, however, he found worthy Dr Franklin tacked on to the name, he was delighted beyond measure with the oddity of the whole affair, and relented towards his victim: for something like a victim had my father become, under the lash of that sarcastic tongue of which tutors and proctors stood in awe. My uncle was a man who by nature relished anything strange or odd. He crowded his rooms with old oak carvings of the most diabolical pattern, had china dragons and demons grinning off every bracket and shelf, and once followed up the exhibition of a mermaid so assiduously that at last he and Dr Scott, afterwards Lord Stowell, were the only two persons in the room, so the great jurist spoke to him, and made the friendship of such a promising sight-seer. Sir William therefore pitied where he had before despised, and began to inquire whether a person with such a name tacked on to his own had anything in him worth knowing; at last he quite relented towards the young fellow, and made his acquaintance.

It was a fortunate thing for my father, who before this had been shown the cold shoulder in Christchurch, that his pursuits were in some degree congenial to those of the young baronet, or he would never have obtained the advantage of Sir William's patronage. To the end of his days my uncle lacked appreciation of any abilities which did not resemble his own ; and as to mere moral worth, it goes for nothing in the estimation of such people. However, my father became in time a kind of shadow of Sir William's, and was honoured with his friendship. The young baronet very often outran his ample resources, either owing to the purchase of a statue when he did not want it, or because he never condescended to pay an Oxford tradesman until the rogue had doubled his bill by compound interest ; and he would on such occasions give a lofty hint of the fact to my father, who was expected to feel great pleasure in assisting him to get out of the scrape. As for denying the loan of all he possessed when his young patron called for it, the idea, I am afraid, never entered his head, for

Sir William could gain the complete ascendancy over such a person as my father and every one else. He was the coolest man on the face of the earth, and never took the trouble to bully or coerce any one; yet he never came into contact with any person whom he could not turn round his little finger. The secret of this magic—for intellectual magic it was—dwelt in the inward conviction of the victim himself, who felt that he had fallen into the hands of a person of first-rate abilities, and of a fascination of character which drew his own towards the centre of light, until he fluttered about it like a moth round a candle.

When my grandfather died, and my father set up in the world for himself, which was in the year that he left Oxford, a relationship of patronus and client was established between the two young men, and lasted for the remainder of their lives. Sir William was to countenance Mr Elvington, and usher him into a sphere in which he had not exactly been born and bred, while Mr Elvington was to have his purse open at the great man's requis-

tion, copy him in his tastes, adopt his political principles, and the moment he was requested to enter the Norman line of the Maurices by marrying an amiable lady who could bring him no fortune, was to return thanks for the honour done to him, and be more the slave of a great family than ever.

CHAPTER III.

MY grandfather Elvington, if what I have heard concerning him be true, had no small portion of the thoroughbred Englishman in his composition. When, therefore, he had once fitted himself into a new suit of opinions political and religious, he took the Briton's liberty of kicking the old garments out of doors, and would have nothing more to do with them. It is true that he was a moderate man in most things, and would, if left to himself, have carried his usual discretion into his new politics; but unfortunately matters had taken a turn in the country, and the very working classes, in whose name the dreadful tragedy on the Continent had just been enacted, turned completely round, and became

brimful of loyalty. Now it would never do for a manufacturer to be outdone by his own workpeople, even in a change of opinion ; my grandfather was therefore expected to come out as a tory of the first water, and enacted the character exceedingly well. He cannot be blamed, then, for viewing his son's career at Oxford with great complacency, and becoming proud of the acquaintances he made : for he often had Christchurch in his mouth. It is true that at first he formed an erroneous opinion that his son ought to distinguish himself at the university, and at last grew so dissatisfied that he spoke to his friend the dean on the subject. That judicious dignitary, however, soon set him right on the point, and showed him how matters really stood.

The dean convinced my grandfather that such ancient foundations, whatever their statutes might say to the contrary, were set apart for the benefit of a particular and exclusive class, and called his attention to the fact that many of the larger prizes in the colleges were appropriated to particular schools, and even to families, which were supposed to pos-

sess the faculty of bringing learned men into the world. He also remarked that those university rewards, which were nominally free, were in reality retained by the gentlemen who happened to be in residence—from motives which all must appreciate—for their own relations: indeed many of them went down from a dean or bishop to his sons by a kind of heirship. He explained how, in order that this system might act easily and without the actual imputation of unfairness, a kind of special education was exacted, which was commonly styled “training,” in which training the sons and pupils of the late fellows of colleges were exercised from the eighth year of their ages up to the eighteenth, and then sent up to the university in what was called “a good state.” It was true that young gentlemen like Mr Elvington were at perfect liberty to compete with these youthful athletes, and indeed their doing so kept up a healthy emulation in the minds of the real victors; but suggested that if his private opinion were taken, he should advise his young friend to turn his back upon such things al-

together, and conciliate the authorities of his college—who had all relations, or the sons of intimate friends, looking for what they might get—by a modest self-denying demeanour.

The venerable dean, who had some humour, showed the hopelessness of any outsider taking a part in the struggle, by supposing that a particular college gave a fellowship to the undergraduate who was the next of kin to the venerable Bede, and also an adept at the intellectual game of cup and ball, being able to catch the ivory ball in the cup one thousand times without missing,—a thing difficult to accomplish certainly, but after all not worth wasting time about. Now he observed, that a man might be an excellent scholar, and yet no relation to Bede; and also that a young gentleman whose abilities had been exclusively devoted to playing with an ivory cup and ball up to the eighteenth year of his age, would beat any poor fellow who merely knew the laws of his own country, was a good metaphysician, or brim-full of elegant knowledge and accomplishments. Yet this deserving

feat would, after all, push the young juggler on to the foundation of his college, and make him a bishop or a judge, while a thousand Mr Elvingtons were starving at the bar, or reading their lungs to pieces in country curacies.

I really cannot say whether my grandfather was convinced by this powerful reasoning or not ; but in the sequel he allowed his son to follow his own tastes, and after my father had made the acquaintance of Sir William Maurice, became very proud of him. Indeed he felt rather ashamed of himself when he considered what a bad figure he should cut in the eyes of posterity, as the mere money-making ancestor of what might in time become a line of gentry. All ancient families must at one time have descended from a hideous blood-thirsty savage, or some money-making snob ; but give us the savage by all means, and save us from the snob ! However, this painful reflection so preyed upon my grandfather's mind, that at last he retired from his mill altogether, in favour of two of his overlookers, and invested the greater part of his fortune in a landed

estate in the vicinity of York. He had a clear north country head on his shoulders, and could turn to most things, if you only gave him time ; so he soon became interested in agricultural pursuits, adding much to his happiness by breeding short-horns, studying the Norfolk high farming, and corresponding with Arthur Young, who succeeded Dr Priestley, as his scientific oracle : for an oracle of some kind, men like my grandfather must have.

I cannot say that he had much increased his domestic felicity by his change of opinions. If a man be not master of his own house, the sooner his eyes are opened to the fact the better, in order that he may submit himself to the person who is. Now, master of his own house my grandfather had not been since the death of his wife, and the usurpation of her place by his own sister, Martha Elvington.

This lady was then, and continued up to the time of her decease (not long since), a female character in the fullest sense of the word. She was brought up with my grandfather in a lonely house in the north country, and had not had the advantage or

disadvantage of any regular education. Governesses in those days there were none, and as for a boarding-school, her mother would not hear of such a wicked place. The little Martha, therefore, just received what plain education she could pick up at a dame-school, and was then left to herself. It was true that her mother, a mighty needlewoman in her day, marked out a course of embroidery, in which in time she might have excelled Miss Linwood ; but the young lady, who was a genius, broke down at the first attempt to make her clever after a set pattern : she spelt the name of good Dr Watts in her sampler with one *t* only, and thus effectually banished that piece of needlework from the best parlour.

This sad failure gave her mother a contempt for her intellect, which she never got over, so Martha was allowed to leave chairs and table-covers to other hands, and educate herself. Female companions she had none, for the house stood in a lonely situation—a valley with a brook running down it, and bounded on all sides with craggy hills ; and as she could not wander about the whole day long, she

betook herself to what few books there were in the house. These, with the exception of the Pilgrim's Progress, were chiefly works on Calvinistic divinity, relieved by the light periodical literature published by the disciples of Mr Wesley. By such reading as this the girl became in time a tolerable theologian, and could have puzzled a bishop's chaplain who was not of her way of thinking, upon more points than one ; but as all studies require a change, the little lady varied her style of reading, and took to her brother's school-books when they fell in her way.

John Elvington was at that time a lad of slow parts, for his solid faculties required time to unfold themselves, and the lively Martha soon beat him at his own lessons. Geometry has always taken pretty strong hold of the north country schools, even French and Latin were beginning to feel their way, and Martha, partly from the love of victory and partly from a natural turn to abstract reasoning, got possession of her brother's Euclid, and worked through the first three books, besides

acquiring French enough to enable her to read any author in that language. These rather rare acquirements exacted the involuntary admiration of her parents, and as she could give her opinion off-hand upon most subjects, and would even sometimes set household matters to rights, she was gradually installed as the genius of the family. Her brother, at that time an awkward stupid lad, had early been taught by defeat that his sister was the superior in intellect, and allowed her to gain an ascendancy over him which of course she never relinquished.

When my grandfather, after the decease of their parents, married and set up for himself, Martha Elvington was a tall north country lass with gray eyes and sandy hair, making no pretensions to good looks; but with no small amount of shrewdness, or shrewishness—the words only differ by a few letters—in her composition, and with a reputation for learning which kept the young fellows about her at a distance. Indeed, as she was of a religious turn, and took an active part in the management of the chapel of which she was a member, and (but this is

scarcely worth mentioning) had ten thousand pounds to her own portion, she was generally set down as the wife, not of her present minister—for he had unfortunately married a decent woman without any money before he had made up his mind that he was to become in the sequel an awakened cobbler—but of some succeeding minister who might happen to be a single man. As it was, she remained a spinster during the life of her parents ; and when, after their decease, she moved into the neighbouring town, she found more congenial occupation for a person of her turn of mind than a mere country house could furnish her with.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN my grandfather, after the decease of his wife, found himself burdened with the cares of his household and the education of a boy and two girls, of whom he knew less than of many of the young hands in his mill, he bethought himself of his sister Martha, and that she was just the person to take the head of his family. It is true that lately there had not been much correspondence between the brother and sister ; but people often lose sight of each other from mere negligence. My grandfather then wrote plainly to his sister on the subject, and Miss Elvington returned him a reply, in which she did not conceal from her brother that she was making the sacrifice of her own leisure ; accepting the charge of his three children, as she

did, only because she felt it a matter of duty so to do. The business once settled, and leisure given to the brother to turn it over in his mind, the result of his meditations over a solitary pipe were not altogether agreeable. He recollected how Martha used to hector him, and dreaded lest she should regain her old ascendancy over his mind : he gave the control over his household up as a bad job, but feared lest his beloved mill might not escape, and altogether saw a dark prospect before him. In short, he half repented the haste with which he had made the offer ; but the business was now settled, and, like a wise man, he must make the best of things.

At last, the dreaded day arrived, and the enemy, in the shape of Mrs Elvington and four heavy trunks, entered the home provinces. There was a slight skirmish with the deceased mistress's favourite servant, who stood up, as she termed it, for the poor children ; but she was soon overthrown, paid her wages, and sent about her business, and the master of the house then himself retreated before the conqueror. As this suited Mrs Elvington's

temper, she did not press her victory, but allowed her brother to stand on the defensive before his mill, and in other matters which can be made unpleasant by a meddling woman.

Both parties were at first on their guard, and talked about indifferent topics, until the truce, I am sorry to say, was broken by my grandfather; who, as he spoke slowly and was dreadfully obstinate, thought that he had a wonderful talent for clear and convincing argument. He therefore could not help provoking his sister, although he dreaded her: he rallied her on what he considered were still her religious opinions, and offered to enlighten her while he smoked a pipe; but, to his surprise, the good lady answered him in a style which he did not exactly understand, although he felt ashamed to own it. What he did make out consisted of something which impartial hearers might have termed a rigmarole, not intelligible to uninitiated ears, but mixed up with an affectation of disdain for the said ears, which could be comprehended in a moment. Miss Elvington spoke long and mystically, and with a placid

smile on her countenance, concerning the old immoral world, and a coming new and improved state of society, when a reign of benevolence, equality, and fraternity would be established on a durable basis. She also interspersed her sallies of universal benevolence with many fiery denunciations of priestcraft, statecraft, and other crafts which stood in the way of what she called "philosophy." Now this jargon, although no doubt perfectly intelligible to its adepts, did not, either owing to the misty way in which it was enunciated, or some want of clearness in the subject-matter, convey any very defined ideas to my grandfather's comprehension; and, as the reader might find Mrs Elvington's discourse equally mystical, I had better refrain from giving him any specimen of it, and just explain the state of mind she was in, and what had brought her to it.

When the brother and sister first parted company, to act their part in a world of which they knew little, a kind of change began to ferment in the minds of both of them, which was a natural reaction from the rigid manner in which they had been

brought up. With John Elvington, a man of plain sense, this mutation ended with some freedom of speculation in abstract matters ; but with his sister, who, notwithstanding her outward austerity was a woman of enthusiastic temperament, the electrical balance was destroyed, and attraction succeeded repulsion. When she took up her residence in a large town, she amused her leisure by reading as much as ever, but still on the old dry subjects ; and, owing to her command of the French tongue, fell somehow or other into bad company.

What the French literature of that day meant, and how, from the playful purring little animal, the toy of marquises and presidents *à mortier*, it had become a tiger, crouching to make a murderous spring, the world now fully understands ; and may yet comprehend more fully, to its cost : for a volcano cannot be put out by merely clapping a brass extinguisher over the crater. Voltaire, that shifty meagre spirit, is still abroad ; and the Pope and Emperor of Austria are dancing before his carriage like whiffers, clearing the way for him in beautiful style. This

literature, then, so atheistical, and yet full of a certain kind of faith—so utterly false as a whole, and yet so painfully true in many of its special animadversions—fell into the hands of Martha Elvington, a person educated in another school of fanaticism, and therefore a victim ready made.

When the good lady consulted also some of the dissenting clergy about her on her doubts, she was not a little surprised to find that half of them were going the same road as herself, and were even in advance of her. An introduction to a Spanish priest who had escaped the inquisition and professed to have turned Protestant, but who was in reality an enthusiastic disciple of Rousseau, completed her ruin. Her mind, after all, was not of a steady poise: she hated indecision, and liked to be dogmatical on one side or another; and being deserted by those who ought to have kept her in the right scale, she threw herself suddenly into the other, and became a female philosopher for the rest of her life.

Here was a scrape for a man like my grandfather to fall into. He wanted a clever woman to

manage his family, and had invited a female Rousseau into his house. The discovery caused him to sit tongue-tied at his own club, and to smoke out his whole stock of tobacco. He had invited his sister to manage his family, and she had already begun to manage himself, and to recover her old ascendancy over him. Then, too, he was up to his ears in business ; and a man's business takes up his time, and tells his conscience to keep quiet, and, as it were, come into business too. He really had no leisure to tell his sister the whole of his mind, and go through a downright quarrel with her ; especially in the leisurely way in which John Elvington quarrelled, as he did everything else.

He at last contented himself with extorting a sort of half promise from her that she would not meddle with his own opinions, and determined to save his children's minds from contamination at some future time, when he should not happen to be so dreadfully busy. Martha, therefore, took possession of the young folks, and being a conscientious woman who always acted up to the light within

her, entered upon her new task with great zeal. She had the passion for bringing up and managing young children, which even the selfishness of advancing years cannot quite extinguish in the breast of any woman; and as she was a great admirer of De Genlis, and had the *Emile* at her fingers' ends, she was only too happy to put her favourite principles into practice. My father was out of her reach, and under the most favourable circumstances would have been a very unfortunate subject for a clever woman to doctor into a Louis Philippe; but the girls were young and malleable.

Those were the days of whalebone and high-heeled shoes for the health of a girl, and of plain needlework to fill her mind; and altogether young ladies grew up puny and fretful, with little stunted bodies and narrow peevish intellects—a misery to themselves, and a curse to their future husbands. Martha Elvington, after she had inspected her nieces and found they inherited their mother's consumptive constitution, locked up their finery in a wardrobe, put them into plain white frocks, and made them

run up and down the hills four or five hours a-day. She had also acquired a great deal of general knowledge of the De Genlis sort, and the girls learned more from her than they could have gained from the miserable schoolbooks of that day, if they had bent themselves double over them for twenty years. This then was her discipline with her nieces ; who, from being delicate and fretful, grew up robust and good-tempered ; and she was repaid for her judicious management of their health by the society of two cheerful happy companions, who in time became devotedly attached to her.

CHAPTER V.

ALTOGETHER matters were going on very quietly in my grandfather's family, when the French Revolution burst like a shell in the midst of society. I have described in a previous chapter what change it brought about in his own opinions; and as for his sister, it rendered her perfectly rabid. Mrs Elvington had hitherto amused herself with mere speculation, but now her favourite opinions were brought into action—the clock had struck, and the time was arrived for Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality to give themselves a rousing shake, get on their legs, and rule the world in a very

superior manner. Who could help being enthusiastic in such a noble work, or refrain from putting a hand to the lever which was to turn the earth? Not Mrs Elvington. There were the benighted folks in clogs about her to begin with, and her own brother, who could turn his people into Jacobins in a week by locking them out of the mill if they refused to riot for "the rights of man." She tried her hand on him forthwith, but found, to her dismay, that while she was advancing in the right direction, he had begun receding in the wrong. Although, therefore, she was a universal philanthropist in general, she conceived a perfect hatred to her brother in particular, and was at no pains to disguise the contempt she felt for his character and understanding.

As for John Elvington, he became perfectly dismayed at his sister's doings, for she had unknown to him entered into a correspondence with Mary Wolstoncraft on physiological matters, and one of her letters found its way into a Sheffield newspaper, which was handed to him by his friend the dean, with

veritable tears in his eyes. Nor did the female Jacobin halt here, for she joined a corresponding society in order to try her hand at a little treason, and published an address, written in very fair French for an English lady, to the unfortunate Madame Roland. On the whole, John Elvington, who had now taken his conscience out of business, felt vexed and uneasy, and feared his sister would bring some dreadful disgrace upon his family. My father, whom she could never make anything of, was at Christchurch; but there were the two girls, and she had turned them into two little Girondists. Had his health not given way, I have no doubt that my grandfather would have acted promptly, and have sent this Brissot in petticoats about her business; but his habitual slowness had now grown into a disease, and, moreover, his conscience told him that his sister had sacrificed her leisure for the sake of his family, and that he would not make her a grateful return by taking the girls out of her hands in a summary manner.

In the meantime, death, that accomplished ana-

lyst, was busy at the calculation, and solved the problem by interpolating a fit of apoplexy. John Elvington slept by the side of his wife before he had the resolution even to alter the will in which he had appointed his sister the guardian of his two daughters, and Martha gained the day; not by clenching an argument, but, as usual in worldly affairs, by the steady flow of the current of events.

Now Mrs Elvington was a female philosopher and stanch disciple of the celebrated Godwin, whose Political Justice she had at her fingers' ends. Like her favourite author, her expansive benevolence embraced the whole human species, and she considered, in agreement with him, that her brother claimed less of her regard than the deceased philosopher Socrates. Now we do not exactly weep when we read at the present day of the execution of Socrates, although we are sorry that the Athenians put such a good man to death; and I am not certain that Mrs Elvington was inconsolable at the decease of her only brother. She was a kindly woman at the bottom; so, probably,

she shed a few tears, and then allowed herself to be comforted. One circumstance, no doubt, caused her to pluck up her spirits, and this was that her nieces, to whom she had been more than a mother, were left in her charge, and that she could now remove them to a neighbourhood where they would run no danger of having the opinions in which she had brought them up weakened as they grew older. York, indeed, with its chapter and cathedral, was no place for a female Jacobin, and she beat a retreat as soon as possible to the town in which she had so long resided.

Even there the change of opinion in England made itself felt; but half-a-dozen dear friends were still left to her, and a strong party of Quakers and Unitarians kept the boat rigged and the frantic loyalists a little in check. My two aunts, Penelope and Sophia, who from their childhood had received from her the care and affection of a tender parent, of course accompanied their relative to her old residence. In her love for her two charges, Mrs Elvington rather gave Mr Godwin the slip; but it was an amiable

weakness, and we will set it off against her erroneous doctrines.

About her nephew, my father, Mrs Elvington cared nothing—less even than at last she cared about her own brother. The latter she thought an unreasonable man, for she had unfolded her doctrines to him in the most convincing style, and yet, out of mere obstinacy, he would not own that he agreed with her. Still he would call her a wrong-headed woman, and fly into a passion with her, and that was better than being treated with quiet contempt: but her nephew was a hopeless case. The young man cared nothing about universally benevolent principles in any shape, although he did charitable actions at times in an unphilosophical fashion, and was not even zealous enough on the opposite side to contradict her when out of humour. He had also given her mortal offence by going up to Christchurch; although he had little hand in the business, and she ought to have blamed the dean who sent him there. Altogether she saw that he was an easy-tempered

young man, who would live upon his property without inquiring whether he had an abstract right to it or not, and would by no means advance social perfection in his time and day. Still, there must have been at one time some little correspondence between them, for my uncle Sir William had seen Mrs Elvington, and taken a sharp survey of her peculiarities; and it is from him I received some of the particulars I have related concerning her. I also learned something from an old family servant, who afterwards married and settled in London, and was a welcome visiter in a humble way at my father's house. This worthy person, by name Mrs Saunders, was never tired of talking to me for the hour together of family affairs, even when I was too young to comprehend them; and most of the facts I have related concerning my grandfather and Mrs Elvington's early history, must be taken by the reader upon her authority.

Of my two aunts, who were left to Mrs Elvington's care and supervision, I have little or nothing to tell. They grew up in her peculiar opinions as

a matter of course ; and no doubt she was proud of her disciples, and expected wonderful things of them. Sophia, the youngest, turned out a kind of Mrs Fry, and died unmarried, of a malignant fever caught in some prison or hospital. Penelope, who had her sister's fortune added to her own, married, with her aunt's consent, the Viscompte Vidanne de St Ange, an exiled Girondist, who afterwards returned to his country and took service under Napoleon. He was shot down before his own guns at Austerlitz, and his widow, who continued to reside in France, did not add, I am afraid, to the happiness of her now aged and venerable relative. She fell into the hands of the priests, and brought up her own daughters in a nunnery. I have received one or two letters from my aunt since my father's decease, but I never set eyes upon her in my life, and really know very little about her.

CHAPTER VI.

How the ancient line of the Maurices, as represented by Sir William and his relations, ever allowed my father to marry into their very distinguished family, I really cannot undertake to say. It is true that he found himself a man of considerable fortune, had a fine person, and possessed some elegant accomplishments; and also that my poor mother must have been devotedly attached to him, for she fretted herself to death when she lost her husband, and followed him to the grave in less than six months. Still, the alliance was one which, after all, hurt the pride of her family; and

my uncle never spoke of it, even to me, save as a matter which was just tolerated, for good and sufficient reasons : probably pecuniary ones.

Both my parents died when I was very young ; but I remember my mother exceedingly well. She was some five or six years older than my father, though still a young woman when she was taken from me. I recall her memory with fondness, for she was kind and indulgent to her child ; and I only wish that she had lived to see him enter the world, and have given him the benefit of a parent's advice. She was of a slight fragile figure, with a pale countenance, which, had it been less emaciated by disease, would have been handsome, and had large brown eyes and a profusion of auburn hair. I sometimes dream of her, and have a superstition that she is allowed to appear before me when some misfortune impends over my head, in order that I may take warning betimes and avoid it.

After the death of my surviving parent, the charge of my education devolved upon the reluctant shoulders of Sir William Maurice ; who was,

no doubt, very much annoyed at the burden. He seems to have come to the rational conclusion that he was just the most unfit person in the world to train a young gentleman in the way he should go, and that the master of a great grammar school, who had edited Plato's *Phædon*, was the warranted article. He therefore duly sent me off to K——, where I ran about with two hundred young reprobates, and had an opportunity of picking up as much vice and as little Greek as I pleased.

When Sir William happened to be in England—which he seldom was, for Florence continued to the day of his death to be the home of his affections—he was in the habit of sending for me and treating me with the greatest kindness, but in a queer fashion. He made me quite his equal, talked to me as a grown-up companion, and his conversation was not always edifying,—he took me with him to his club, where I heard elderly gentlemen talk about pretty opera dancers and the dexterity of George the Fourth at whist. When I really became too old to be stalled any longer in the an-

cient and royal foundation of K——, my uncle took the trouble, for the first time in his life, to ask the head master if I carried away any classics with me. When he heard that I was not a bad hand at my Homer and Livy, and that I enjoyed the reputation of being a gentlemanly youth, he expressed himself very much gratified, and told me in a careless manner, as if communicating something I might listen to or not as I pleased, that I was to be his heir, adding that “a confounded bad heirship I should find it.” He even took such a fancy to me that he promised that I should return with him to Florence; and bitter was my disappointment when I made the unpleasant discovery that my uncle had been talking over the matter at his club with Professor Staggerer.

Professor Staggerer was a middle aged gentleman who deserved the highest respect, when he confined himself to the accomplishments in which he really excelled. He could walk into his lecture room, throw open his Plato, and translate a couple of pages into the most elegant English, giving, at the same time,

good and conscientious change for the original Greek. But the worthy man prided himself very little upon this dexterity, which he had acquired when he was a poor friendless young snob, and set his whole heart upon forcing his way into fashionable society ; in which he was just tolerated, and no more. He therefore wasted his time and intellect in hunting up superannuated dowagers, dining at the tables of weak-minded noblemen, and converting his portly person into his own idea of a clerical Adonis of fifty. Of course he belonged to a good club, and there scraped acquaintance with my uncle ; a kind-hearted man, who would not crush a worm, much less a professor. I met Mr Staggerer myself once or twice there, and found him a civil person, but thought his conversation rather too ornate and elaborate. It struck me at the time that he did not succeed very well in trying to make himself out the frivolous unsteady person for which he wished the irregular old gentlemen in the room to take him ; and when I went up to the university I detected the impos-

ture at once, for the Professor was in reality a virtuous man, of studious habits, kind-hearted and conscientious.

When, then, my uncle detailed to the Professor his ingenious notion of taking a youth of nineteen through a course of Italian morals at Florence, Mr Staggerer, who always did his best to keep his own pupils out of mischief, saw that this rash step would never do, and that Sir William, when once off his guard, would himself lead me into the primrose path of iniquity in no time; so he bethought him of his own university Cambridge, and said that, although his own side at his college for that year was full, he would enter me on that presided over by Mr Cadger, who then (and always afterwards, for very good reasons) happened to have room to spare. My uncle might then set off to Florence, and his nephew be packed up to Cambridge, and in fact got rid of in a few weeks.

Now I had been hugging myself with the idea of seeing Italy, and enjoying myself to my heart's content at Florence; and therefore, although I could

raise no reasonable objection to the proposed alteration of arrangements, I went up to Cambridge in a very bad temper. I was determined not to be pleased with anybody or anything, and passed my freshman's term, which has generally attractions of some kind or another for a neophyte, in a fit of the sullens. As time wore away with me, I did not choose to be any better pleased with the university, but sulked in my own rooms; cursing the town, the gown, the college, the dons, the vice-chancellor, and even the esquire bedells, for walking underneath my windows before and after the said vice-chancellor and condescending, gentlemen and men of learning as they were, to carry a silver mace on their shoulders for a few paltry hundreds a-year.

I had never in my life been a student after the orthodox fashion; and if I had been, my health was too irregular to allow me to grind after the disgraceful ungentlemanly Cambridge manner. I had some relish for the Greek historians, but for mere verbal criticism did not care one rush; and as to iambs, why I could never write a correct one in my life:

and verbal criticism and iambics, then as now, made a man a Cambridge classic, if he confounded the campaigns of Julius Cæsar with the exploits of Alexander the Great. During my second year I took some fancy to mathematics, and believe that I really did understand the differential calculus; but Dr Rymers and his Manuals, all to be learned by heart, cut a possible wrangler off in the bud. After that I just kept the Plato and Aristotle lectures in my own college, saw the instruments handled at the observatory; and there my studies came to a full stop. For the next few months I walked about the beautiful chapel at King's, learned the stained windows by heart, wondered why the college was kept as a mere oven to bake the Eton boys in, and finally voted Cambridge the dullest town wherein an evil destiny could imprison a poor wretch, and the Cam a filthy ditch, only fit for the reception of the senior fellow of a college, if he perpetrated a joke more than commonly atrocious.

Nature never, as the reader may see, cut me out for a reading man at Cambridge; but had she done

so, my position on the side of the indolent and inefficient Mr Cadger would soon have damped the ardour of a Newton or Porson. My college was divided into several sides, as they are called: that is, a certain number of resident fellows each takes a body of undergraduates under his charge. Mr Staggerer, of whom his pupils could never speak too highly, took one batch; Mr Cadger another; and there was a third tutor, an able and conscientious gentleman.

The tutors, who are paid by fees, which reach a large sum in the aggregate, are not always the very best men, either as regards learning or intellect—for the system of allowing them to succeed each other by seniority is a bad one, since it sends eager clever men away, and encourages idle ones to stay: who generally do what they consider their duty; although the Cambridge fashion even of doing one's duty is embellished by many graceful and amiable peculiarities. On the other hand, if a man chooses to shirk his work, throw himself back in his chair, and say, "Here I

am, and here I mean to stay, and the undergraduates shall be forced on to my side, pay me my fees, and be worse treated and looked after than so many young felons in a model prison," he may play this scandalous trick with impunity; for he has waited a good many years for his tutorship, and has to all intents and purposes a vested interest in it.

All I shall say on the present occasion concerning Mr Cadger is, that he was disposed to shirk his work; and although not a bright article in other respects, had cultivated the art and science of shirking to such an extent, that many people up at Cambridge really imagined he had reduced it to a written system, and intended to bequeath his manuscript to the college. I was soon, therefore, given a few hints, that if I really did possess any abilities I had better hide them; as otherwise Mr Cadger would look upon me as a personal enemy, for setting his side a bad example and encouraging the young men to read. This would compel him to take some interest in them, and trouble his head about their concerns; and about the pensioners on his side, Mr

Cadger—who never offered to resign his lucrative appointment, indeed held on to it tooth and nail—was determined not to trouble himself in the slightest degree.

Somehow or other I got on very well with the men of my own year and those below me. The mighty reading men of my college early excited my admiration by their unassuming deportment and conciliating manners, and I really had not health to go much among the rowing men and take part in their foolish orgies. Still there were many nice young fellows of my year who neither pulled themselves to pieces on the Cam, nor read themselves into a consumption in their own rooms, but who lived quiet lives, and improved their minds without allowing Mr Cadger to detect them in the offence; and out of them I selected my friends. Mr Cadger certainly annoyed me at times; but I paid the fellow's currishness back in his own coin, and yet managed to snap my fingers at him. So time passed away, and at last, when the period arrived when it was requisite for me, if I expected any de-

gree at all, to put myself into the hands of Mr Cadger's friend, the resident master of arts, who lived on the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, I refused to grind for my degree at all; but just took my exeat from the tutor, and bade farewell to dismal dowdy Cambridge for the rest of my days.

I was not at that period of my life a very modest youth, and therefore wrote a long letter to my uncle, informing him that I had cut the university and civilly requesting him to approve of my judicious step. In due time a reply came from Florence, just in the style I did not relish—indeed it made me unhappy for some weeks. My uncle told me that he was growing an old man now, and should not be many years longer in the world; that when he looked back on his own career, he saw nothing in it which merited approval; that he had set his own nephew a bad example, he knew, and was sorry to see him so ready to copy it, instead of modelling himself upon the standard of the many eminent men with whom he must have come into

daily intercourse at the university. However, he added, although I had acted like a hasty young man, and had thrown myself upon a world of which I should get tired before I was ten years older, I must not be allowed to feel myself wanting in the resources requisite to maintain me as a gentleman in society, and to pay for the consequences of any foolish scrapes I might get my wise head into. He informed me, therefore, that if I would call upon Mr Gently, I should find my allowance increased; and he conjured me, if I ever exceeded it, much or little, to make a friend of that worthy gentleman, and not to throw myself into the hands of the Jews. This goodnatured letter really made me feel very miserable, for I knew that my conduct could not exactly be defended, and had expected a bullying; but instead of giving me one, my uncle had written to me with a kindness which I felt that I did not merit: I really wished that he had treated me more in accordance with my deserts.

Here I am reminded that my reader, who has accompanied me in my walk to Bedford Row, has

no doubt grown weary of the Elvingtons and Maurices, and that we have now arrived at the office door of the worthy professional man, Mr Gently.

CHAPTER VII.

MR GENTLY the solicitor was not one of those professional grandees who endeavour to drive everything before them by "the pomp and circumstance of glorious law." These gentlemen grow up in a wholesome fear of her majesty's judges at Westminster, and do not therefore presume exactly to insert in the public newspapers an advertisement, "that Mr Capias has succeeded to the old shop for law, and still supplies the genuine article;" or, that the "Messrs Pettifoggers are now winding up twenty chancery suits under experienced clerks, and have no objection to make an advance in cash to a distressed reversioner before they file the bill;" but

they open, as it were, a kind of legal gin-palace in a good neighbourhood, and entice the public in by the splendour of their swing-doors and plate-glass. Mr Gently, who was not of this tribe, adhered to the old established ways of his profession; which, to tell the truth, were not cleanly ones: never allowed his windows to be cleaned, quarrelled with the painter and decorator, and kept his business-door shut. I had an opportunity of coming to this conclusion whilst standing at the said door and ringing the office-bell at intervals convenient to myself. At last, a gray-headed old copying-clerk, whom I had never before beheld in any position except that of intently digging into lined brief-paper with a steel-pen, appeared at the portal, with ill-temper depicted on his countenance; who, after he had ushered me respectfully into the outer office, vented his ill humour on two young gentlemen who had been quarrelling about opening the door, and were laughing at having made the scribe quit his stool. These lads were not unlike each other, for they both had the same sharp young

lawyer-like features and bright black eyes, and wore clean turned down collars, and silk handkerchiefs tied loosely round them ; but the remainder of their dress denoted a difference in rank. The taller youth, who worked about on his stool in a pair of shabby brown pantaloons, much too large in the seat, had also sundry articles of legal stationery before him, and was copying into a large letter-book, while his superior in rank was just yawning and doing nothing. In order probably to attract my attention as I came into the room, this young gentleman submitted to his ally the propriety of his “pitching over the bodkin and ferret,” to which the other replied, “that he would do that next week,” and went on intently with his copying. On receiving this tart answer, the originator of the conversation requested the public “to look at that young snob at four and sixpence a week !”—and commenced some slight flourishes with a ruler, tapping the other’s knuckles and telling him “to wash his filthy paws.” As this compliment was returned by the bodkin, and the ensuing passage at arms did not altogether advance

legal studies, a seedy youth, who was inscribing something against somebody on a long roll of parchment, reminded the lads that this was no time for larking, and that a cause, entitled "Cracks and Craggles," was coming on.

"Here's a start, Taxer," said he to a tall heavy man who came bustling into the office and appeared to have been drinking, for he smelt of "Old Tom" or some other cordial:—"Cracks and Craggles comes on to-morrow—that rascally plaintiff won't settle."

"Won't settle, eh?" cried Taxer, fiercely:—"Then we must fight them and get up the case!—By the way," added he, looking reproachfully at a young man who just sauntered into the office with his hat stuck on one side of his head, and whom I recognised as the senior articulated clerk of the establishment—"that reminds me, Mr Tallboys, of a slight omission on your part, and I shall be happy to have a few words with you on the subject."

Mr Tallboys walked up to the desk with the sulky air of a felon entering the dock at Hicks's

Hall, and said, "he was ready for the few words, but they must be deuced few, for he was off again to see a trotting pony at Aldridge's: he couldn't therefore stand there all day for the pleasure of Mr Taxer's conversation, but for a few minutes, to be counted by the watch held in his hand, he should be happy to listen to him."

"Mr Tallboys," said Mr Taxer, suppressing a hiccup, and addressing the articulated clerk in the same impressive manner in which he was in the habit of entreating my lord the judge to grant him four days more time to plead, "I don't ask an opposite party whether he does attend to business or whether he does not. Every legal gentleman manages his own establishment, as Mr Justice Little-dale once laid down to me, at chambers. All I am entitled to urge is, that you will not get your fellow-clerks into trouble."

"Trouble, be hanged!" exclaimed Mr Tallboys, who nevertheless looked vexed—"What's the matter?"

"Matter!" echoed Taxer, forgetting his dignity,

and almost shedding tears—" thirty-five shillings out of some person's pocket—that's the matter!—My little gentleman at home can't have his new hat next Sunday—that's the matter!"

" Dress him in a Scotch cap and a plume of feathers, Taxer!—He'll look lovely, going down to Gravesend!"—suggested the junior articulated clerk in a lively tone.

" Will you do me the favour, Mr Simmers, to attend a little more to increasing your knowledge of your profession, and to interrupt the business of the office a little less," replied the managing clerk with some asperity of manner. Mr Tallboys, you promised me as a personal favour, sir (for I know you don't like the common law), to attend that summons with Shuffler's people, while I just ran round with Chowser's clerk to take a glass of ale after our set-to; and when I came back to chambers I found that our summons had been called on, and that the judge was up. Shuffler's clerk owes me a spite, and I won't ask him a favour, if it costs me five pounds to amend the proceedings.

"Gently's a trump," thoughtfully suggested Mr Tallboys.

"He mustn't hear of it," said Taxer—"Cracks and Craggles is coming on, and he mustn't be made nervous."

"Then I'll pay for the amendment out of my own pocket; so give us no more of your humbug," said Mr Tallboys. "And take my advice, Taxer, and drink a little less malt-liquor with Chowser's out-door clerk: he has eyes at the back of his head, and can worm anything out of such a man as you."

"Hear, hear!" cried the two lads, who approved of Mr Tallboy's magnanimous spirit exceedingly.

"Why you are keeping Mr Elvington here," remonstrated the common law clerk, very much mollified—"Who's with Gently?"

"Craggles, storming away like a bedlamite," replied the junior articulated clerk with great glee.—"And there he goes,"—pointing to an old gentleman in shorts and gaiters, who rushed through the outer office as if his feelings were too much for him.

“ If you will have the kindness to step this way, Mr Elvington,” said Taxer—who was almost the only civil person in the office, for the easy tempered master of it ruined his clerks by over-indulgence—
“ Mr Gently is now at leisure, and will be happy to speak with you.”

When I entered the sanctum of the legal gentleman, I cannot say that I found him in his usual state of professional coolness, for he looked flurried, and tied and untied several bundles of papers out of mere nervousness: indeed, he did not at first recognise me, and seemed very much ashamed of himself when he observed that I had been standing before him without being requested to take a seat.

“ My dear Mr Elvington,” said Mr Gently, I really beg your pardon for keeping you waiting, for it was my own appointment: yes, glancing at his diary, to-day at half-past three; but I am dreadfully run for time. I have a heavy cause coming on, and two sharp fellows on the other side, Chowser and Naylor, sir. Of course, you have heard

of them—an immense run of practice—but nasty—nasty”—said Mr Gently with a face of disgust—“never keep a clerk six months, and yet never make a false step.—Clever! too clever by half!” exclaimed the lawyer, looking up at the ceiling in an entranced state of professional admiration at the abilities of those two thorough legal rascals, Messrs Chowser and Naylor.

Here Mr Gently paused from confusion of ideas, for he was rather a nervous man, and seemed puzzled what to say next; and as I saw at a glance that the two sharpers were frightening him out of his wits, and that if I called his attention away to other business Mr Craggles might possibly lose the action, I suggested that my own time was of no great value, and that, if he were at present engaged, I would keep some other appointment.

“Why my dear sir,” replied he in a very kind tone, “my business with you is rather important; but not so immediately pressing as that of Mr Craggles. Do you ever walk out of town, Mr Elvington?”

“Walk and ride,” said I, “Mr Gently:—but what has this to do with the matter?”

“Why I live in the country now,” said the solicitor, inscribing the name of his place of residence on a card, “and have only one quiet day in the week, and that is Sunday. Do not think that I fall into bad habits, and devote the Sabbath to business, as many of my professional brethren are in the habit of doing. But as the matter on which I wish to have a little conversation with you is hardly business in the strict sense of the word, I should feel happy if you would do me the favour of dining with me on Sunday next, and we can then go into matters very quietly after dinner: I hope I am not asking too great a favour.”

Now, in my private opinion, I did think that Mr Gently was asking too great a favour of me, for I knew that he was proud of being concerned for Sir William Maurice, and had always treated him with great deference. This deference, I imagined, descended to me as the baronet's next of kin, and ought not to be trenched upon by my own solicitor

asking me to dinner, just as if I were only the submissive stuff-gown who drew his bills in Chancery. I really was not best pleased at the invitation ; while, at the same time, I pitied the poor man for the excited state he was in, and saw that Chowser and Naylor were driving him into a nervous fever. I accepted the invitation then ; and taking the card in my hand, was gratefully bowed out of the office, leaving Mr Gently in the hands of Mr Taxer, who seemed to be the person really occupied in getting up the case in Cracks and Craggles.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN I had leisure to consider the address upon Mr Gently's card, I discovered that the learned gentleman had ensconced himself in the cockney paradise named Highgate-rise. This was too great a distance for me to walk, according to my friend's recommendation, derived probably from his own recollections of pedestrian feats performed in the early days of his life. So I sent round for my mare, which stood at livery, ready to bolt through the stable-door for want of exercise, and turned her head towards Highgate. We cleared the suburbs at a quick rate, and walked quietly up Highgate Hill, by the side of a tall row of chestnut trees

which overhung the park paling of some retired person or other. Here I fell to musing about the old days, when many a time and oft had I looked out of my windows in Jesus Lane, and seen the men running home from the boats under the magnificent chestnut trees of the college grounds while the dinner bell of Trinity was ringing : in fact I forgot to keep my eyes about me, until my nag, being the more sensible animal of the two, pulled up of her own accord opposite an inn called "The Fox."

I put her up there ; and, on inquiring my way, found that I had overshot the mark, and must return down the hill until I came to the lane branching off from the main road, and in that lane I should find Mr Gently's domicile. Following the direction, I reached a pretty, quiet little lane, the upper end of which was shaded by two ranks of fine elm trees, but full, at the lower part, of detached snuggeries of wealthy cockneys, who had perfectly covered themselves up with a fence of bushes and young plantations : and I thought that Gently might have chosen a worse spot. One gate was

just like another ; so I began with that at the end of the lane, and after ringing at as many wrong bells as gentlemen going out to dinner mostly do, came to the right house at last. I saw, at a glance, that my man of law, who was rather modest in his business arrangements, compensated himself in his retired leisure, and lived like a person of some pretensions to wealth.

As for the style of Mr Gently's cockney villa, which appeared to be newly built, I cannot say that it would have quite satisfied the critical eyes of Sir Charles Barry or Professor Cockerell ; but it was as architectural as brick towers and Italian windows generally render a moderate gentleman's house ; and there was a worse specimen of builder's Italian next door to it. The details, for the most part, were rather modest, and resembled a small country railway station ; for which, indeed, it might have been mistaken, had it not burst out into a violent fit of ornateness at one end, where it shot up into the air, as if to beat a palace at Florence or Rome out of the field. Yet, as I said, there were worse speci-

mens of architecture round it, and the house looked as if a little money had been spent upon it. There was a pretty little terrace-garden in the front, crowded with stone urns filled with the brightest scarlet geraniums I have ever seen, and in the portico before the door stood a double rank of beautiful flowering plants in pots; for Mrs Gently, as I subsequently learned, was a great horticulturist.

When I rang the bell, Mr Gently himself, who was standing at the open door—probably on the look-out for me, for he was a punctual man, and perhaps I had kept his dinner waiting—ran down the steps, and welcomed his guest most cordially to his *rus in urbe*; and, as we entered the drawing-room together, he introduced me to his domestic circle, all seated waiting for something, or somebody, probably a dilatory visiter. I was introduced, with due form and ceremony, first to Mrs Gently, a good-looking lady with a clever expression of countenance, and then to her three daughters, Miss Mary Ann Gently, Fanny Gently, and a splendid little girl called Amelia. I also learned during the day that there had

been once a "poor Tom" belonging to the family, but that he had been accidentally drowned at Eastbourne about two years preceding my visit; so that Mr Gently had now no son to succeed him in his lucrative practice.

As for the two grown-up daughters, the second one, Fanny, was a very pretty little girl indeed, with hair of a bright sunny brown, fine hazel eyes, a pouting lip, small delicate features, and the greatest expression of goodness on her countenance that I have ever seen beaming from the face of a human creature. The eldest daughter seemed to be some years in advance of her pretty sister, and had rather passed her bloom; but she was still a handsome woman, with a well-turned head and fine intelligent features. She had a sharp, quick eye, and rather an accurate expression of countenance, as if she had served some years in her father's office, and was accustomed to see the bearings of things: indeed I soon found out that she was the most important person in the family, and that her parents and sisters generally deferred to her judgment.

After a little general conversation, in the course of which Mr Gently did not exactly request me to admire his house and furniture, but yet led the way to a few remarks which rather flattered his self-complacency, dinner was announced. Mr Gently took the arm of his second daughter, and left Mrs Gently to my protection, while Amelia followed as she could. In the dinner-parlour I had the good fortune to re-discover Miss Gently, who had previously quitted the drawing-room, and now stood gazing out of the front window ; from which I inferred that she had left the arrangement of the napkins and wineglasses to the pretty young servant who waited at table, and had been merely amusing herself by looking into the garden. The master of the house, who at times fell into a fit of seriousness which I could not then understand, forced a few cheerful remarks concerning people coming out of town to dinner, and bringing an appetite with them ; but as similar jokes have been made before by elderly gentlemen when heading their own tables, I need not repeat them. I was then

seated in the place of honour, with Miss Fanny next to me, and the portrait of a pleasant old gentleman in powdered hair and a loose white neck-cloth smiling at me over the way. This, Mrs Gently informed me, represented her father, a deceased vestry clerk of Warminster, Wilts. Miss Gently, who, although she defended her rights in the family on all proper occasions, had rather retired from the general run of small attentions in favour of her pretty sister, seated herself on the opposite side of the table, and dinner commenced.

Now here was rather an extraordinary circumstance. I was only dining with one of those middle-class families who are expected to be walked over and extinguished the moment a person like myself, with the blood of the Maurices in his veins, gets among them, yet really I found them as intelligent and well-bred as if they had all been Lord Claudes and Lady Angelicas. Mr Gently was sometimes absent in his manner, and his eldest daughter had a few passages of argument with the pretty servant, who probably wanted oc-

casional prompting, but it was quite evident that the whole family knew what they were about. I soon learned that their principles were what are called "serious," and when serious people are always burning red and blue fire for the benefit of their neighbours, such principles are serious indeed ; but the Gentlys were none of such people, and evidently made no pretensions to superfine piety. However, as it was Sunday, we talked chiefly about the Exeter Hall oratorios and the anthems on surplice nights at Cambridge ; and I had to set Mrs Gently right in a strange impression the lady had acquired that the Fellows in residence up there were lively intellectual gentlemen of great conversational powers, who rather affected rakishness and played cards in the college chapel, and to inform her that even the Pensioners had in these days actually attained to the idea that they might be smart specimens of humanity without affecting profanity. After the wine and dessert, and the usual jug of claret vouched for by Mr Gently's client the great wine merchant, the ladies

withdrew, and I was left alone with my host, who challenged me to fill my glass. He then put on a face of professional sagacity, and reminding me that a little business had brought us together, said that if I was quite willing, we would now go into it.

CHAPTER IX.

As I complied with the worthy gentleman's challenge to despatch his claret, and put myself into the position of a person ready to listen to a speech a mile long, Mr Gently thought fit to commence the conversation ; and he did so with an unpleasant proem, in which he observed that we had all of us in this life vexations to contend against. He said that he himself was at that moment a prosperous and happy man, surrounded by an affectionate family, and, he believed, esteemed by the clients who honoured him with their confidence ; and yet two short years since he had been plunged into the very depths of affliction by the loss of his only

son. He also added, that he had only yesterday the misfortune to lose an important cause, "Cracks and Craggles," in which his old friend the defendant was made the victim of two legal sharpers. "Yes," he said, "we all have our trials:" and here he paused.

As this commencement was not very encouraging, I made him no reply; for I felt uneasy, and wondered what would follow.

Mr Gently then spoke of my uncle, and said that in the course of his professional experience he had met with many bad men of business, but that poor Sir William, he thought, was the worst he ever came across. He declared that he, Mr Gently, had made many efforts to open my uncle's eyes to the fact that his affairs were becoming entangled through mere negligence, and had written many a long letter to Florence all on the same topic, but to no purpose. No doubt they were allowed to remain unread, while Sir William continued buried in frivolous pursuits, or busied himself about pictures and statues. About the period of his sister's

decease, he roused himself so far as to attend a little to business, for he called upon Mr Gently, and spoke to him of the uncertainty of life, and informed him that he had considered it his duty to remain unmarried, so that no son of his might reproach a worthless father with leaving him heir to his embarrassments. On this occasion Mr Gently pointed out to Sir William that he still possessed considerable property over and above the family estates, and rallied him upon the bad character he gave himself. My uncle, however, was for once in his life in earnest, and said that "young Maurice should be his heir, for that the worsted spinner's blood was not quite washed out of his veins, and that he would know how to keep money when he got it." Upon this, Mr Gently drew up a short will, leaving what property my uncle had in his own control to me: the family estates, I was aware, had gone over to the present Sir Anthony Maurice. Now he, Mr Gently, would be very happy to find himself undeceived, but as far as he could at present see, not one shilling would ever be com-

ing to me from this bequest. Here he paused again, proposed that I should replenish my glass, and gave a keen glance at my features, to see how I took the bad news.

Now it was not pleasant for a young man who had just conquered the first burst of his grief at the loss of a kind relative, and had begun to contemplate the advantages contingent on his succession to a certain amount of property, to learn that his benefactor had been deceiving himself all the while, and had nothing to leave behind him. Nevertheless, when Mr Gently paused, I felt rather relieved at finding that nothing worse was to come out; for I knew that I had never yet spent the full income of my own fortune, and should not quite beg my bread because my uncle had misled himself. Finding I was expected to say something in reply, I told Mr Gently that the news was bad, but might have been worse, and that I was obliged to him for the delicate manner in which he had broken it to me.

“ Well,” answered he, hesitating as he uttered

the words, "We must be—quite sure—that we have come—to the—to the worst, Mr Elvington. However, solicitors are frightened a hundred times on their clients' account, before they are hurt. Now, Sir William was your guardian——"

When the conversation took this unpleasant turn, I felt my face flush, and really grew angry with Mr Gently: I exclaimed sharply:

"But there are the Yorkshire estates, sir, my father left me. My uncle could not surely make away with them?"

"The Yorkshire estates," replied Mr Gently, throwing himself back in his chair, and no doubt indulging in delightful professional recollections of deeds and documents which would fill a tin box, "gave great trouble to your deceased father, and at last he got tired of them. I remember the circumstance well, for I went down to Yorkshire with my partner, Mr Rackham, and carried through the sale. We dined with the residentiary canon, who was lord of the manor of part of them, and he and poor Mr Rackham made rather free. Yes, your

father sold the estates remarkably well, and bought into the old fours at sixty-three and a quarter. Fine times those, Mr Elvington, for buying into the funds."

Now, it did occur to me that if my uncle had beggared me, in the sequel, I had not derived much advantage from this profitable sale and investment; but I was too much chagrined to smile at the worthy man's simplicity. I therefore coldly told him, that I guessed what was to come next, and that he might spare my feelings, for my uncle's personal conduct towards me had always been kind and indulgent.

"Well," said Mr Gently, who, although not a profound person in other respects, had a professional knowledge of human nature, "I would not delude any one by endeavouring to keep him in the dark; but just now I am in the dark myself. When Sir William was last in England, he never came near me, and I only learned by mere accident that he was consulting another professional adviser. I can see now that he was raising money at any sacrifice,

and altogether fell into very bad hands. Yet, after all, we will hope for the best, Mr Elvington."

I shook my head despondingly, and said that I knew I was ruined, and that nothing could convince me to the contrary.

"There is property somewhere," said Mr Gently. "Sir William, to the day of his death, collected pictures, and of course such things always possess a certain value; but, alas! my dear sir, he had the morals of his class, although by no means the worst specimen I have seen of them. He lived at Florence, in the palace of an Italian Duke, and the Duchess exercised an unworthy influence over his mind. I have written out to see what can be done, but I find that the Duke claims everything; and it is difficult in these petty states for a foreigner to press his rights against a native of the country. But if there be law in Tuscany you shall not be robbed of your property, because Sir William thought fit to live with an Italian lady in the house of her own husband. And now," said he, "I can tell you better news. Your uncle, who never could

be accurate even by mistake, paid me a little too much when he last settled accounts with me, and I have a small balance of fifty pounds at your service. We can settle my costs," said Mr Gently, as if he meant to be very sharp with me, "when we have brought this Italian grandee to account. This, my dear young friend," he added in a fatherly way, "is bad news for you, and you had better go home and think it over. Perhaps you will not wish to meet my family again this evening, and I can see you to the Fox in five minutes."

If I had just then started from the Fox, I should have turned my horse's head in the direction of the nearest Hampstead pond, and she would have returned to Suffolk Street without a rider. But I determined not to be put down by circumstances, whatever it might cost my feelings; and was also rather angry at Mr Gently's endeavouring to twist me about like a child. I smiled faintly and said that I should be happy to pay my respects to the ladies again, and the solicitor, whose wife was reckoned rather a grand person in her own con-

nexion, and who was the father of two handsome grown-up daughters, rather complacently led the way into the adjoining room.

In this apartment I found Mrs Gently seated on the sofa, suffering from a headache, and Miss Gently presiding at the tea-table, sending out tea and coffee cups and calling them in again with great accuracy and precision. There was also an addition to our party in the person of a gentleman, whose name I had read for the last six months at the side of the doorway appertaining to Mr Gently's premises in Bedford Row. This was one Mr Sadgrove, who had recently commenced his professional career as a solicitor in the cities of London and Westminster. Mr Sadgrove was a slight young gentleman of middle stature, who wore a white neckcloth and buttoned boots. His manners were quiet, and might have been sheepish, had not the duties of his profession, which compelled him to advocate his clients at Basinghall Street and elsewhere, brought him out. He was not bad-looking, but had the features and voice of a sharp little

girl: Amelia Gently appeared manly by the side of him.

The conversation, however, had not flagged between Mr Sadgrove and the young ladies, for they were old acquaintances, and Miss Gently in particular treated him in a very friendly manner. When I entered the room they seemed to be talking about Cowper, and Kirke White the unlucky poet whom the worthy Johnians coached into his coffin. As I interrupted a long story about Kirke White, Fanny Gently kindly seized the opportunity, and tried to hand me my coffee out of due course, all the time listening to my forced cheerfulness and incoherent observations with a pleasant smile. Amelia appeared to be reading Mrs Sherwood's "Emma and her Nurse," sipping her tea between the pauses of that tragical little story; and was occasionally interrupted to repeat some verses of Cowper which she knew by heart, or to point out the position of one of the twelve tribes of Israel on the map of Palestine. After a few painful efforts to force a conversation, I relapsed into silence, and

was glad to allow Miss Fanny to join the conversation between her sister and Mr Sadgrove. That gentleman was not exactly diffident, and not exactly pert, but might, about the five-and-thirtieth year of his age, fall into the style of discourse called the pragmatical. He therefore responded to Miss Gently's well-defined observations on her favourite Kirke White with equal precision, and answered Fanny's notes of admiration when a pretty passage from the mild poet was quoted, with a quiet smile which seemed to imply that if Mr Sadgrove pleased he could spoil Kirke's market as a poet in a very short time.

Mr Gently in his office was the soul of professional honour, and would not have let out a secret to oblige the lord chancellor; but in the bosom of his family he rather unbent, and Mrs Gently, whose residence in Bedford Row in the early part of her married life had given her a taste for legal gossip, could occasionally worm a few facts out of him. She had been able to ascertain, then, that I was to hear unpleasant news after dinner, and that my

uncle's property had somehow or other gone wrong. She soon saw, therefore, that I was merely forcing my spirits, and from a charitable disposition to relieve me, reminded her daughters that the bells were chiming for evening service, and threw out sundry hints about the loneliness of my road home. Mr Gently, who acknowledged a nod or two from his wife, did not oppose me when I offered to take my leave, but volunteered to accompany me to the Fox, where he patted my mare on the shoulder, and pretended to be wide awake to a good piece of horseflesh. I jumped across her back, turned her head towards London, and fell into a train of melancholy reflections, which were only interrupted when she pulled up of her own accord before my door in Suffolk Street.

CHAPTER X.

THE good Mr Gently's kind-hearted attempt to coax his client into the belief that the misconduct of a careless relative had not entirely ruined him, was not successful—perhaps he did not expect it to be so. It merely warded off the shock at the instant of such a dreadful blow—for a dreadful blow in good sooth it was ; and I should do wrong to compare it with any of those ordinary buffets of fortune one receives when struggling in the stormy sea of life, dancing over one wave, breasting another, stunned and overwhelmed by the one rolling after it. In this battle with the surge there is an energy evoked by the sight of the breakers heaving towards us, and

after drawing a long breath, we feel the muscles strung and the chest glow with healthy exercise. But the results of this shock to me resembled those of some dreadful accident, when a man wakes up from a long swoon and finds himself deadly faint from loss of blood. I felt sick at heart. Here I had been living in the lap of luxury, toying on the knees of a painted and deceitful world, and now the harlot had turned me adrift—cheated me out of all I possessed, and then thrust me into the streets.

Since this evil fate was to overtake me in the end, everything had been wrong with me from my birth—my education, my habits, even my virtues. In my own walk of life, the very highmindedness with which I held aloof from the petty struggles around me would have kept me safe in my own quiet path; but haughty seclusion from the world was no more possible now. I must come out of my cell, struggle for a mere existence, and put my health and strength into a lottery, in which I knew beforehand the blanks would turn up to men like me, and the prizes, large and small, be

gained by others. The antagonists with whom I must wrestle had been trained for the struggle of life from their boyhood, and they would throw me at their feet one after another. I felt, as I remarked, deadly sick, and weary in my flesh from head to foot. I shut myself up in my rooms, closed the shutters, took my meals I scarce knew how, and often fell asleep in my chair after the clock told me that it was near sunrise : daylight came and went, and I took no heed of it.

This state of mental prostration was of course open to the observation of the quiet young man who waited upon me, and his master the wine merchant. The latter worthy at once came to the conclusion that I had been gaming, or risking my money on Swallowtail or Kiteflyer, and had been completely cleaned out on the turf; and as it was not creditable for his establishment to harbour ruined people, he determined to get rid of me forthwith. As, however, he was rather afraid of his customer, and came to the rational conclusion that a downfall in life seldom renders a rugged temper

more placable, he held a consultation (probably with his Mercury), and determined to coax me out of the house by civility, aided and assisted by a plausible lie. He therefore came into my room with a very long face indeed, and was grieved to inform me that Shaki Effendi, the Turkish ambassador, had hired the whole upper part of the house for some Ottoman subjects. He pleaded that he was eaten up by rent and taxes, and scarcely made a living: he was aware that I had stipulated for six weeks' notice—some gentlemen kindly took only a fortnight under very peculiar circumstances. Could I have his interest at heart and oblige him? As I detested the very sight of the rooms, which hourly brought to my mind what a dreadful misfortune had befallen me, I played into the rogue's hands, and promised to let him have his apartments. He thanked me in fulsome terms for my kindness, and probably had a good laugh with the quiet young man at the expense of my greenness, when they were safely at the bottom of the stairs.

Several more days passed over my head, during

which I took count of nothing. A lad called from Mr Gently's office—he brought a letter and waited for an answer. I sent down word that I had received it, and then threw it into a drawer; for I had really not the courage to open it. How long I might have continued in this crestfallen state, I cannot tell—probably until the “malignant and turbaned Turks” thrust me into the street; but I was at last roused by a casual visit from the only man on earth I could have allowed to have seen me.

This was an old schoolfellow at K——, an eccentric fellow, but the best classic we ever turned out. He had left us abruptly, just as he was grinding up for Oxford; for the death of his father compelled him to turn into the world very early in the morning. I lost sight of him for some years, but heard that he had carried some open scholarship and was at Oxford after all. At the end of about four years' time I met him in London; and, to tell the truth, rather out at elbows. He invited himself into my rooms, and offered to repeat his call; I was glad to see him and talk about old times, and what the

men we knew at K—— were doing in the world. When he could keep his tongue steady he was no despicable antagonist, and as we did not altogether agree in opinion, we had many tough arguments together. This man was a thorough socialist, and often alluded to Paley's crows in the cornfield—a passage by the way, in which the cautious and worldly archdeacon, who “could not afford to keep a conscience,” lets his real opinions peep out—and once made my ears tingle by asserting that he thought “the Rights of Property” something very like fudge. Of course I always stood on the defensive, for I thought of the Yorkshire estates and Sir William's little country box, and had no fancy to throw them into a raffle. When we grew very warm, I was in the habit of reviling him as a follower of Robert Dale Owen, while he stigmatized me as a hard and harsh philosophical radical; compared with which breed, he told me, your old Tories were enlightened thinkers. Still we agreed pretty well in the main, and I thought it my duty not to show the cold shoulder to a learned man,

who could not eat the covers of his own books, and therefore sometimes, I suspected, wanted a dinner.

This person, then a man hanging on the world as loosely as a cobweb in a nook of some old church, was the only human being upon earth to whom I could at that time have told my troubles; and I did open upon them a little as he sat in my rooms. Had he been foolish enough to pump me, I should have kept the best part of my secret back, but as he sat perfectly quiet and said nothing, I let by degrees everything out. He sympathized very much with me, for he was a good-natured fellow, and his own crosses in life had softened his heart; at last he became so vexed that he burst out in the following fashion—for his conversation, even when serious, was full of quaint expressions and odd similes, picked up in a versatile career.

He said that he was sorry for me, for he knew the rough and tumble of life as well as any man; and since he left K—— had been kicked about like a foot-ball. When he first found himself

homeless, he took refuge with a maiden aunt, and carried her prayer-book for her every Sunday as she walked to church, for six months ; but notwithstanding this act of virtuous complacency, he was eliminated from the establishment by the old lady's favourite servant, who declared that she had not been hired to black a gentleman's boots. They had never taught him at K—— to black his own boots, or do anything else that was useful ; his aunt would not pay a shoeblack, and at last he was obliged to turn out and seek his Day and Martin somewhere else.

He then jumped, he told me, like harlequin through a window, into a very small private school, the proprietor of which had advertised for a good classic as his usher. Here he found that the classics began and ended with Ovid, but that he could agreeably fill up his leisure by giving the dancing lessons, teaching navigation, acting as drill sergeant, helping the master's wife to sort the pupils' clothes, and cutting the young gentlemen's hairs on Saturday afternoon. However, he

held on for six months in sheer desperation, and only quitted at last because the talented proprietor of the school never paid his ushers one penny piece, and the people in the town expected even ushers to hand a few shillings over the counter.

He next appeared on the stage of London, and according to his own expression, “ducked and dived about;” but of course he did not explain clearly where and under what circumstances. While prowling about London, he heard by chance that there was an open scholarship vacant at St Swithin’s College, Oxford. St Swithin’s was no great place, and was irreverently styled the Dust Hole—but any college was better than none. He read himself into a congestion of the brain in order to answer in first-rate style, borrowed fifteen guineas of a friend, and rushed up to the examination. But he really might have saved himself the trouble, for the “open scholarship” had long been bespoke by one of the college laundresses for her own son. This good woman washed for the Provost’s wife, and as the Provost was a henpecked husband, her interest in

the learned foundation of St Swithin's carried everything before it. The provost, however, who was a kind-hearted old fellow, took a fancy to my friend's answering, and, although he did not dare to reward it with the scholarship, got him on to the foundation, and was a good friend to him in many respects. He read, he told me, exceedingly hard whilst in the college, but could not take more than a second class in classical honours, because his aunt would not advance him the money to pay the fees of Mr Billytoes, the celebrated grinder.

Mr Billytoes, who in his undergraduate days had never washed his face more than once a-week, shook his head when he saw my friend so spruce and tidy. He also accused him of wasting time in thinking about what he read, and said such nonsense would never do with him. "Translate, sir, translate," said Mr Billytoes, and then come to me to have "*apax legomina*" and parallel passages chucked into you. "Do this and I can get you your first class. Two hundred pounds is my fee, paid into my bankers."

As my friend had not two hundred pence, he was therefore degraded to the second class. But a second class was good enough for St Swithin's, and had he been the lineal descendant of one Grypefull, a woman's mercer, who founded the two vacant fellowships in the college, he might have been walking over the undergraduates in fine style at this very time; as it was, he found himself at sea again, and had to return to London. Since then, he confessed that he had lived upon his wits, and as bitter experience had taught him what living upon one's wits meant, he was very sorry for any man who was compelled to follow his example. He said that he sympathized with me sincerely, and would serve me to the utmost of his power, and that the best question he could put to me was, "What did I mean to do for a living?"

This question staggered me. I positively declare that, stunned as I was, I had looked back merely, and never contemplated my future prospects in the slightest degree. I shivered at the very words, and told him that, depressed as I was, I could not collect my

thoughts, but should be happy to listen to anything his experience might suggest.

“ Well, you have the advantage over me, Elvington,” said he, “ in having taken your degree from a good college : now— ”

“ My friend,” replied I, interrupting him hastily, “ I have never taken any degree at all. I never thought it of the slightest value to a person in my independent position, and was too idle to grind for it.”

“ That’s a stunner,” said he, much vexed ; “ in that case you cannot inform the public that a Master of Arts, of ———— College, Cambridge, is experienced in tuition, and will be happy to read with a few gentlemen during the vacation. It is difficult to turn you into a humbug, I see. You have kept your terms for the bar, have you not ? ”

“ Some two or three, just to enable me to compel Mr Cadger to set me free to come up to London during term. When I left Cambridge, the end was answered, and I never entered Lincoln’s Inn Hall for another dinner.”

"All heads and no tails, by St Swithin," exclaimed my friend musingly.—"What is to be done?—I am trying the Weekly Press dodge myself: it—(after a pause it came out) it is the shabby Old Growler, as we call it; but, in the language of the gods, the British Lion Conservative Palladium that I am on at present.—You are surprised to hear that, are you not?"

It was rather surprising, for my friend was in the habit of advocating and pleading for "a new and more advanced state of society" on every possible occasion; and the British Lion was a journal of oldwomanish toryism, which was in the habit of denouncing the Prime Minister as a person leagued with "chartists, socialists, papists, and other miscreants," and of conjuring him in a maternal tone to reconsider the danger of a position in such company and retire from politics altogether; in which case the Lion would not rouse his mane and urge an indignant British public to tear the said minister to pieces.

My friend, when he once got over the awkward

confession that he wrote for the Growler, seemed to recover his spirits, for he added gaily : “ You and all the world know my principles ; but the misfortune is, that people of better principles than mine are left to starve upon them : and starving is unpleasant. The old Growler gives every one great latitude, if he does not interfere with the parsons ; and, if I ever try my hand at a leading article, is quite contented with the pounding I give to the millocrats ; and I do that with an easy conscience. Now, our staff—no great one—is short of a hand, and I am great cronies with Simply, the editor : we want a foreign correspondent and general sub-editor for three months ;—of course, you don’t leave England (we are too poor for that) to supply the place of the unlucky fellow who at present writes from everywhere for us ; but as he is just now in the lunatic asylum at Hanwell, that place of residence is not a pleasant one to have his letters dated from.”

“ Well,” said I laughing, in spite of my bad “ spirits, that account of a foreign correspondent

sounds encouraging ; however, I will think the matter over, and drop you a line if I approve of your proposal."

" I meet the editor at our club to-night," he went on to say. " You have heard of our club, of course ? "

" I really have not," I answered.

" Well, the world will hear of it," said he rather vexed, " for we are getting up the steam amazingly. However, I must be off. There is our card of subjects, and where we meet : you see old Simply takes the chair. He is a good fellow, and only requires a little gammon about his literary importance to be turned into the warmest friend one has. If he puts you on our staff, you will have something to tide you over three months ; and, at the end of that time, these cormorants at Florence may have disgorged some of their plunder : but, if not, long life to the British Lion and its talented foreign correspondent ! "

So saying, he ran down stairs, and left me to the company of my own thoughts ; which were bitter

ones certainly, but not so full of utter misery as those which filled my mind before his friendly visit.

CHAPTER XI.

I SCARCELY felt myself in good spirits enough to go round to the tavern, where my friend's club, (which, by the way, styled itself “The Society of Peaceful Revolutionists,”) held its sitting; but at last made an effort and started off. On entering the room, I found that only some fifteen members of society had yet been revolutionized by peaceful means; but they were intelligent-looking men. There were several of those elderly gentlemen who have not been able to settle down in life, whom one meets at such places, and the usual recruits from the rising generation: youths who are quite ready to throw up a good place in the Bank or a substantial

Fire-office, provided they can only hang on to the press for a few years, like lads behind a carriage, until they art whipt off it. Fourteen of these gentlemen all stood in a knot, by what in winter was the fireplace, pursing their lips and looking argumentative and crushing before their time ; whilst the fifteenth gentleman, the editor of the British Lion, sat apart upon a horsehair-couch, and was evidently keeping up his dignity : for he held a key, although only a latch one, which opened the portals of the press, and the junior members of the club were dreadfully afraid of him. My old schoolfellow just then came into the room, and immediately introduced me to the great man, who eyed me doubtfully through his glass ; for he carried one suspended by a black ribbon round his neck, and was ready to look a ministerial bit of jobbery, or social crisis, through with it in five minutes. He appeared a short man, dressed in black, with high-lows and white cotton stockings. His face was not by nature very intelligent ; but he had given it a thoughtful look, by keeping it on the work, and had worn the

hair off his temples by literary drudgery. Gentlemen of the press occupy, in these days, a good position in society, and many excellent scholars of my own year at Cambridge, who had no vocation to take holy orders, had found honourable occupation on the newspapers ; but the British Lion, *alias* the Growler, had merely been set going for temporary political purposes, and all parties were on rather a low scale of remuneration. Mr Simply then did not appear to me to be in the first rank of literary men, and when I knew more of him I found that I was not far out in my conjecture.

It is not my intention to give a sketch of the debate of the evening : indeed, this everlasting and perpetual sketching of every place and every occurrence, from the Duke of Mountarrogant's ball to the conversation of the drunken cadgers in the lock-up-house, has become tiresome in the extreme. My head was at the time full of other business ; and I just remember, that the question of the evening was something about co-operative principles, and " whether nations could be brought to adopt them

without external pressure?"—and that the Irish member of the club stood up for rebellion, and drew a frightful picture of his own country, which he called, as usual, the Island of Saints, describing her as sitting with her tuneless harp beside her and no longer recalling the melodies of the halls of Tara;—and that a waspish young special pleader who followed him, accused him of begging his premises and having the middle term of his main syllogism undistributed; but, at the same time, stated, that he envied Mr O'Leary the glowing imagination which made his days one happy dream—and begged his pardon for setting him right.

The best speech of the evening, according to my own opinion, was made by a young medical man, from whom I did not expect much, for he looked idle and rakish; nevertheless, he spoke with intelligence. His remarks certainly smelled a little of the shop; but this is the common fault in the discourse of every scientific man I have ever met in society: with the exception of our greatest astronomer, who, if left to himself, would just as soon

devour Philip Quarle or the Arabian Nights, as correct La-place. The medical man then came out strong with the Development Theory, and contended that time alone would gradually develop us all into very superior co-operative animals ; of course, he dragged a syllabus of popular geology into his speech, and spoke of ammonites, madrepores, trap, gneiss, basalt, the ichthyosaurus, and pterodactyle, until one grew weary of such a learned jobation. He then flew off, at a tangent, to Phrenology ; a science in which he acquiesced, for his part, entirely, adding that, whenever he was called in to see a patient, " he always measured the chap's facial angle, and stuck it into his little bill in the inverse ratio." This rather thin joke raised a laugh among the younger members of the club, and altogether, when he sat down, they seemed to be proud of him. The medical man then thought he had done enough for that night, and must not make himself cheap, so he jumped up suddenly from his chair and apologized for leaving us ; declaring he had half a dozen serious cases to visit before he went home.

A few other speeches followed, but they were not very brilliant : and at length the club, having revolutionized society sufficiently for that evening, was allowed to rise. The members stood chatting together for a few minutes, and then filed off to different places to finish the evening. I accompanied my old schoolfellow and Mr Simply into the Strand, and my friend skilfully brought us up short in the vicinity of the Coal Hole. Here we heard a concert going on in a room above us : gentlemen singing, and others applauding vociferously ; but we took a seat on the ground-floor ourselves, and just ordered a chop. Spirits and water, at which the editor was no bad hand, followed ; and I thus took my first lesson of gentish life, under the auspices of a family-man : as many have done before me.

My schoolfellow by degrees turned the conversation upon the unlucky foreign correspondent of the British Lion ; and Mr Simply got rather maudlin about his temporary seclusion from the world of letters. The poor fellow, it appeared, had not only corresponded night and day with foreign potentates,

ambassadors, principalities, and powers, but had also corresponded a little too much with foreign wines and spirits ; and had for some weeks been labouring under the delusion that he was the Emperor Napoleon, and had a mission to shoot the Duke of Wellington whenever he could catch him riding down Whitehall. This monomania, of course, rendered his sojourn in Hanwell of unascertained duration ; and when the sub-editor was pretty far gone, my friend boldly stepped in and proposed my filling his place, at the same time giving me a flaming character for abilities, and a ready pen which almost wrote of itself. Mr Simply, who had somehow or other taken a fancy to me, and who also wanted to get the foreign correspondence off his own shoulders—for he was just then stepping from Berlin to Vienna, and then to “ our office,” in editorial seven-leagued boots—rather entertained the idea. However it would never do to comply with an audacious proposal to load and fire off that great gun the Growler all at once, so he shook his head, and remarked that the post required peculiar abilities, and a spe-

cial turn (namely, for fiction) which compelled many clever men to throw it up before they had tried their hands at it for a week. However, after a little flattery on his own talented occupation of the vacant seat, and a decent resistance on a few other preliminaries, he allowed us to talk him over ; so the interview concluded by his making an appointment for me the next morning at the office of the King of the Beasts, where I was to write my first communication from Paris as fast as he could look over the manuscript sheets.

CHAPTER XII.

It is not my intention to give any farther account in this chapter of my connexion with the British Lion, save that I went round to the office where they published it the next morning, and then and there wrote my first communication from Paris under the inspection of Mr Simply. The editor expressed himself very well satisfied with my performance, especially since I put in a French phrase or two ; but he hurt that vanity which lurks in the breast of every author by occasionally trimming a sentence when it did not seem curt enough : for he told me that sharpness and crispness were the essence of writing of this kind, except when an

insurrection happened to be going on, and then one was expected to get a little excited, describing the cannon booming down the streets—whirr!!—whirr!!—thud!!—thud!! and to sicken at the sight of the dead bodies as they carried them under the window. He also inserted a few lines as the heads of a private conversation between Louis Philippe and Monsieur Thiers in the Palais Royal, which took place at the very time we were writing, in which interview the amiable monarch shed tears as he clasped the hand of the great opposition statesman, and called him “Mon ami.”

These little flourishes and amendments having been introduced, Mr Simply said the article might now go to press, and made a second appointment with me at the office, adding, that he lived at New Camden Town, and should be happy to introduce me to Mrs Simply, who would not object to our despatching a bowl of punch together. On making a few inquiries as to my duties, I found that I should be required to turn up at the office at all odd times and seasons, and had better change my apartments,

and settle myself near Fleet Street at once. This discovery did not cause me the slightest concern. I could not afford now to reside at the West End, and felt that I should be in much better spirits when I no longer sat in the midst of furniture and gewgaws which only reminded me of what a "pernicious height" I had fallen from. Then also my kind friend and landlord—who had got some scent of what had really befallen me, for his wife was listening at the door whilst I was detailing my troubles to my old schoolfellow—recollected how many cases he had read lately of suicides by gentlemen in decayed circumstances, and took care to remind me that Shaki Effendi's Ottoman friends were coming into the rooms over my head. As I happened to be a bad sleeper, I was generally roused up about five o'clock in the morning by a bumping and dragging about of heavy boxes, which represented the Turk's luggage, enough to shake the ceiling down over my head; and although I am by no means of a compliant temper when any one wishes me to oblige another person by disobliging myself, I felt that

the rogue was too much for me, and that I really must get out of his house.

I began therefore to look up my books, collect my linen, and destroy or arrange my private papers ; and whilst engaged in the latter operation came upon the unopened letter from Mr Gently. I must say that my face turned very red when, on unfolding the paper, a check for fifty pounds fell out of it. It was a bitter consolation to reflect how this fifty pounds now seemed a gold mine in my eyes ; relieving me as it did from the dreadful uneasiness in money matters which had already begun to break my rest in the morning, more even than Shaki Effendi and his trunks. I was still more vexed when I read Mr Gently's very kind letter itself, in which he apologized for taking the liberty of enclosing the balance in his hands, and requested me to give him a call about business matters on the very day before that on which I opened the letter. It has occurred to me since that this was only a ruse of the amiable old gentleman's, in order to see me again and ascertain how I bore up against

my mishap ; but this did not strike me at the time, and as I felt alarmed at having missed what might have been an important appointment, I determined to go round to Bedford Row at once, cashing the check in my way.

On reaching Bedford Row, I found Mr Gently (who was not always rushing about the Inns of Court making believe that he was busy) in his office, and as fictitious narrative was not my forte, notwithstanding my engagement with the British Lion, explained to him very frankly that I had been so disturbed in my mind as to have omitted to open his letter. The solicitor, who was bound by his professional dignity to take this negligence as a mighty offence, looked very grave, but soon came to himself again. He then closed his office door, and read me a long letter he had written to Florence, and on which he said he was desirous of having my opinion before it was posted. " However, I had not kept his appointment, and the letter was on its way." He then threw himself back in his chair, and observed, that Mrs Gently as well as

himself took the liberty of feeling interested in the nephew of so old a client as Sir William, and would it be too much if he asked me what arrangements I had made for the future. "There's the bar, now, Mr Elvington," said Mr Gently, glancing at the portrait of old Lord Eldon, which hung over his bookcase.

Misfortune soon teaches a man to be evasive, and if he earns his bread in a shifty manner, to conceal it. I knew that the shabby old Growler would stink in the nostrils of the very correct person before me, Tory as he was ; so in the first place I told him, in order to prevent him from hurting my pride by offering another check to me, that I was in no immediate want of money, thanks to his kind enclosure. As regarded the future, I said that I had some idea of keeping the remainder of my terms in Lincoln's Inn—this was the veritable fact,—and that in the mean time I could make use of my university education without being beholden to any man.

This candour raised me exceedingly high in the

good opinion of Mr Gently, who at once threw off his stiff professional air and spoke to me then and ever afterwards as a kind friend. Indeed, I found out at a subsequent period that Mrs Gently—to whose opinion in worldly matters he usually deferred when it did not involve the settling of a conveyance or will with trusts—had pronounced herself, soon after I quitted Highgate Rise a few evenings before this interview, in favour of the apparent openness of my disposition ; for I had, without intending it, taken that excellent lady on the blind side. The name of several serious authoresses having come up in the course of the conversation, Miss Gently, and of course Mr Sadgrove, had declared that Charlotte Elizabeth dimmed the light of all preceding female Evangelical Luminaries. Now Mrs Gently thought very highly of Charlotte Elizabeth's style of coming down upon the Roman-catholics ; but as she had met Mrs Hannah More once or twice at great tea-meetings in the west of England, she was rather fond of talking about that venerable old lady, and putting

her at the head of her own branch of literature. I had read a decent novel by Mrs More myself, and therefore was just able to chime into the conversation, and give it as my opinion that she had the materials of a pleasant writer in her. This quite satisfied Mrs Gently, who claimed me, with the usual logic of ladies, as agreeing with her in opinion, and was in the habit of putting her clever daughter down with the crushing remark, "Mr Elvington has the same high opinion of poor dear Mrs More that I have, Mary Ann; and of course in these matters he must know better than you."

But to return to the present interview. Mr Gently, after we had talked over legal matters a little, once more threw himself back in his chair, and glancing again at Lord Eldon, indulged in a delightful professional reverie. Every solicitor in England thinks the bar the grandest and most noble profession upon earth; and although he is snubbed by the bar, and cut by the bar, and even pushed by the ushers of the Queen's Bench into the Exchequer, and by the ushers of the Exchequer

shoved into the Common Pleas, and all because Mr Sergeant Nonplus is tearing his way into Court, he takes it all in good part, and only worships the wigged division of his profession with more profound humility. Mr Gently had himself once cherished a romantic dream of shutting up Bedford Row and turning conveyancing counsel, and had only been restrained by Mrs Gently, who reminded him of his young family, and threatened to go home to her father if he made such a fool of himself. However, on this occasion he indulged, as I say, in a professional reverie.

“So you are going to the bar, Mr Elvington; and, to speak frankly, are just in the worldly position to make your way at it. , Lord Thurlow, sir (glancing at another framed print of a sulky old judge in a large wig), said that a man ought first to spend his own fortune, then squander that of his wife, and then go to the bar. Lord Erskine, sir, whom I just remember, always asserted that he should have broken down in his first address to the jury, if he had not felt his children pulling at

his gown. Sam Romilly—we used to call him Sam before he got on so wonderfully—entered himself of Gray's Inn because he was unable to purchase the seat of the Sixth Clerk in chancery, to whom he was articled. I congratulate you cordially, Mr Elvington, on having made choice of the noblest profession on the face of the earth;—shall be proud to give you your first brief, and shall not quarrel with you when you get a silk gown and forget to nod to old Gently the attorney."

I laughed, and replied, that as my Lord Chancellor had not yet offered me a silk gown, there was time enough for me to give myself any airs; but added, that I trusted that if I did rise at the bar, I should not prove thankless to the man who had given me my first lift over the stile.

Mr Gently shook his head, for in his heart he admired the superciliousness of the bar exceedingly, and replied, "Ah, my dear sir, all this professional etiquette keeps the two professions in their places; and I go with it myself. However, you

must read, Mr Elvington, read hard—harder than you ever did at Cambridge (which was no difficult matter), and get the law at your fingers’ ends. I need hardly say that you have the command of my library, and that Mr Simmers shall bring round my Fern on Contingent Remainders when you wish a little very first-rate reading. And, sir (warming into a delightful glow, and rubbing his hands at the bare contemplation of the exquisite range of literature to which he was introducing me), when you require a little relaxation, there is Case reading. Poor Sir Samuel made himself great at the bar almost entirely by reading cases. You had, I think, better begin with the great case of ‘Cockroach and Salmon,’ the finest decision ever pronounced by Lord Eldon, and although so subtle, full of first-rate law. Ah, sir, there is no such law in these radical times. I have just had to look up that beautiful Case, for it has cost a client of mine a hundred pounds by compelling him to get the signature of an infant heir-at-law to a deceased trustee of real estate. The conclusion was

an interesting scene, for the dear little fellow the trustee, who was only two years old, ate an apple with his left hand, while the solicitor for the vendor held the fingers of his right hand on the pen, and traced his name for him at the foot of the conveyance. Sir, Cockroach and Salmon is a masterpiece of our beautiful legal reasoning, and ought to be inscribed word for word on the great Chancellor's monument."

Here Mr Gently paused, and I was myself too much overcome with the beauty of the law in this great Leading case, and the rationality of the proceeding to which it gave rise, to venture upon even an interjection of admiration. The solicitor did not preserve his silence long, however, for he pulled out his watch, and seizing hold of a slim parcel of papers tied round with red tape, informed me that he was about to have a little intercourse with the Bar at that very time, for he was on the point of running round to the residence of Mr Bellows of the Inner Temple, to consult him on the preparation of a case.

“Which way do you walk, Mr Elvington?” said Mr Gently, kindly: “a little scheme has just come into my head, by which I think I can advance your professional studies.”

I doubted the fact in my own mind, but of course did not wish to add to the ingratitude of turning my back on Lord Eldon and Cockroach and Salmon by hurting the feelings of a person who took such an interest in my welfare, so I replied that it did not matter to me how I returned to the West End, and that any suggestions he could make as to my future studies would be very valuable and practical as a matter of course.

“Why, you see,” said Mr Gently, not insensible to a little flattery, “I do not exactly stand at the bottom of my own profession, and throw a certain amount of business into the hands of Mr Bellows, who is a young beginner. Now it does not suit your arrangements to read with any Pleader just at present, or to buy a great number of books, and Mr Bellows, who is a well read man and has an extensive law library, may not be unwilling to

show a little kindness to a student who has a personal introduction from me. And so (pulling on his gloves) we will with your leave go on one of a solicitor's voyages of discovery, and help you on to the first steps up to the Rolls, or the marble chair at Westminster ; who knows, Mr Elvington ?”

CHAPTER XIII.

DURING our short walk, I found Mr Gently very communicative, for he had got on the only subject upon which he happened to be a man of many words—namely, business matters; and on this occasion he treated me to a full, true, and historical account of Mr Bellows.

“I believe,” said he, “you will form the same favourable opinion of Mr Bellows that I have myself acquired from my intercourse with him. If he really has any fault as a professional adviser, it is an excess of modesty which sometimes leads him to fall too readily into the opinion of a man

like myself—his senior in standing, certainly, but yet only a member of the inferior branch of the profession. I do sometimes hit the right nail on the head, but I always make Mr Bellows read the law well up and go over the ground two or three times, and then if he takes my judgment in preference to his own, I am not accountable for it. Occasionally, sir, we positively call in Mrs Bellows—for she knows something of law too—and make her give the casting vote. Ah, sir, Mr Bellows has never taken one false step in the course of his professional career, and has married into the very elite of the legal aristocracy.”

“Probably then, sir,” I suggested, “the lady wears a wig as well as a gown, and is Mr Bellows’ superior in standing at the bar as well as legal knowledge?”

“Very good, Mr Elvington,” said the solicitor, relishing a legal joke; “why, Mrs Bellows is certainly a few years older than her husband, who was not quite forty when he married. Mrs Bellows, sir, is a lady of great intellect and sound

judgment in most matters, and is the only child of one of the greatest luminaries that time has spared to us, Mr Ancient Sergeant Molehill, a contemporary of Scott and Ellenborough. You have heard of him, perhaps, Mr Elvington; for the Sergeant was one of your first-rate men at Cambridge, and was Senior Wrangler in the very same year that Lord Chief Justice Gaily—a good classic, Mr Belows tells me—was plucked and sent away in disgrace for not writing out the common pulley and siphon quite accurately. Ah, sir, you people at Cambridge are beautifully accurate! My Lord always treats the Sergeant with great deference, although being in the Queen's Bench he has very little to do with him. You have seen Molehill's pumps, Mr Elvington, of course?"

I had never seen Molehill's pumps in my life, nor could I understand why Mr Gently should call my attention to that article of the great man's costume; but as the question was put seriously, I thought that I had better make a jest of my ignorance, and answered that I really had not, but

that I thought the said pumps must be wide and capacious.

“He, he!” laughed Mr Gently: “very good again, Mr Elvington. It is a ticklish matter to joke before the Court in banc, but these neat little witticisms would tell remarkably well on the circuit, in a quiet respectable town like Hertford or Warwick. But I cannot quarrel with you if you really do mistake my meaning, for we musty old lawyers have a concise way of alluding to our books of reference, which must sound ridiculous enough to uninitiated ears. I allude to the work by which the Sergeant first gained his great reputation—‘Molehill’s Law of Private Pumps, and on the Reversionary Interest of Parochial Officers therein.’ A neat work, my good sir, full of acute law, and distinguished by that breadth of view and largeness of mind one expects to find in a high wrangler from Cambridge.”

By this time our conversation had brought us to the middle of Chancery Lane, where Mr Gently halted before a little dingy private house, squeezed

between the shops of two thriving law stationers. On the door, which was scarcely wide enough to admit a corpulent solicitor, was inscribed in white letters "Mr Bellows," while a private bell told us that Mrs Bellows had taken up her abode in the same domicile. A sleek-looking youth, who appeared dreadfully oppressed when he ascertained that the gentleman who gave the neat legal rap at the door was the great solicitor Mr Gently, marshalled us the way that we were going, and in due course Mr Bellows was revealed to his two clients, seated in a small back parlour, and entirely surrounded by a legal library clad in professional calf.

On an ancient horse-hair chair was cast, by no means with an eye to effect, a rusty stuff gown and well-worn wig, and a red bag crammed with papers stood by the side of them. The owner of this legal property, Mr Bellows, himself a tall, portly, middle-aged man, had thrown himself back in an ample library chair, with a pen between his teeth, while he held at arm's length a slim document on paper: probably a plea or declaration. When Mr Gently

was announced he gave a terrific start, and took his eyes off the paper immediately ; thus affording us the view of a round florid face, by no means of a meek and submissive aspect, sharpened by keen gray eyes : indeed his features altogether appeared to be the property of a person by nature inclined to play the bully, and come down upon people, if he thought he could do so with impunity. Signs of talent or acuteness on the learned man's rather vulgar countenance I was totally unable to detect ; although his eye was shrewd enough, and could no doubt see a long way when its owner's interest prompted it to do so.

“ I trust that I am not interrupting you, Mr Bellows,” said Mr Gently, with a certain amount of respect, but with more confidence in his manner, methought, than he would have displayed had he been introduced into the bodily presence of the Ancient Sergeant ; “ but a little difficulty has come across me, and I am desirous of having your professional advice, in order to see if I can remove it.”

“ Interruption, my dear sir ! None at all,” replied

Mr Bellows, with a rough voice subdued to a tone of infantine softness ; “ pray, sir, be seated : and you, sir, (to me)—Mr Shakely, bring another chair from the outer office. And how do you find the—hum—ha—common law, my good sir ? ” said Mr Bellows, who was by nature slow of ideas, and had a slight impediment in his speech ; but when he once got on to the railroad of legal forms and phraseology, steamed on at high pressure with an interminable train of legal verbiage.

“ More lively than I wish it to be, Mr Bellows,” answered the solicitor ; “ but when clients will bring these matters to us, we must do the best we can for them.”

“ No one could—hum—ha—accuse Mr Gently of not doing his—hum—his duty for his clients in the Queen’s Bench, Common Pleas, and—hum—ha—Court of Bankruptcy,” said Mr Bellows. “ Good old practitioners, Mr Gently, are, as my father-in-law the Sergeant well observes, like good old port, the better for keeping, although occasionally—hum—ha—crusty. But sir, you look

well, and—hum—ha—in the full vigour of your professional intellect, and will outlive a dozen of us. Really (for here came three decided taps at the door), Mr Shakely must not allow me to be—hum—ha—disturbed, when on your business especially, Mr Gently. Oh! it's only an old friend. Mr Gently, my dear Mrs Bellows, our old and respected client."

Mr Bellows pronounced these words very sweetly, but methought impressively, to the person who had tapped at the door and now walked boldly into the room. This was no less a person than his consort, who had probably smelt out a little legal business, and come to enjoy her share of it. I had some desire to see what sort of a woman this eminent daughter of an Ancient Sergeant could possibly be like, and my curiosity was not ungratified.

Mrs Bellows was a tall, meagre, elderly person of about fifty years of age, and bore a remarkable resemblance to the three-quarter-length print of Lord Coke which adorns some editions of Christian's Blackstone. She had the same sour fea-

tures, pinched up mouth, and hard-cut, severe eye; and as she wore a long stuff gown with a tippet round her neck, and a black head-dress which a lively imagination might convert into the mixture of trencher cap and coif worn by the Elizabethan Judges, the illusion was all but complete. Mrs Bellows took, or rather assumed, her husband's invitation to remain in the room, while a grim smile of satisfaction stole over her features when she saw that he was closeted with the influential Mr Gently, and she returned that gentleman's greeting with the hard kind of cordiality with which a Judge's clerk recognises the civilities of the man of law who represents a firm of first-rate Agents in New Inn.

"Don't let me interrupt business, gentlemen," said Mrs Bellows: "every hour is precious at this time of the year. These are Mr Gently's papers I think, Mr Bellows?"

"My dear—hum—ha—really," replied the intimidated husband, setting to work immediately, "a little friendly chat with our old friend—hum—distracted my attention. However, if you will

give me—hum—one quiet three minutes, I will—hum—ha—run my eye over them, Mr Gently.”

“I trust Sergeant Molehill enjoys his accustomed health,” said Mr Gently to the good lady, while her better half paused and seemed busy over the papers.

“Vigorous,” replied Mrs Bellows, in a decided tone. “No lack of law, sir, at seventy-seven years of age. The Sergeant stood five hours in the Pleas the day before yesterday arguing the great tithe cause of Puggleton Parva. Well, Mr Bellows (to her husband, who had put down the papers), and what can you do for Mr Gently?”

“Mrs Bellows, you put—hum—ha—a difficult question,” said the learned gentleman, who looked very much as if he had been reading the papers without understanding them; “the law—hum—ha—is apparently—hum—apparently in the favour of your client, Mr Gently. Small and Scales is decidedly ruled that way—have the kindness to reach me down the Report, Mrs Bellows—but then the case in the Exchequer Chamber last July has

quite unsettled all previous decisions. It is not yet reported, Mr Gently; but the Sergeant was in it, and has had the kindness to hand me his private notes. Have you formed any opinion on the subject, my good sir? Your practical knowledge has frequently been—hum—ha—of value to us.”

“I have no fear of a nonsuit myself,” said Mr Gently. “In any case, we may move for a new trial, I suppose, with some prospect of success?”

“A nonsuit is, as you say, Mr Gently—hum—ha—little to be feared, and Lord Abinger would, in all probability, grant us a new trial. I had—hum—come to the same conclusion myself, Mr Gently, before I put the question to you.”

“Won’t Shelley’s case,” suggested Mrs Bellows, who had been listening to this legal conversation with intense delight, and probably watching her husband keenly in order to make sure that he got the law out of the experienced Mr Gently before he risked his own opinion—“won’t Shelley’s case take that matter in, Mr Bellows?”

Mr Bellows turned rather red in the face at this

uncommonly bad shot hazarded by his better half ; for Mrs Bellows was better read in such elementary works as the Law of Private Pumps than in the wide range of Mr Gently's favourite literature, and Shelley's case had of course no application to the business in hand. Notwithstanding his chagrin, however, he could not help casting a quiet look of professional triumph at Mr Gently, who himself smiled ; but then he thought it better to avoid a domestic scrape, so he answered mildly,

“ Shelley's case, my dear, is—hum—ha—certainly of—hum—of extensive application, but does not—hum—meet the present legal difficulty. Can I look over these papers at my leisure, Mr Gently ? You can give me until the day after to-morrow, I see. And now allow me to inquire after your excellent family. Mrs Bellows owes Mrs Gently a call, but she really never goes anywhere.”

“ I trust Mrs Gently will not stand on etiquette, but take a quiet dinner here with her three daughters,” said Mrs Bellows, in what was intended to be a most conciliating tone of voice. “ I have

always the greatest pleasure in Miss Gently's society. The Sergeant dined with her in last Hilary term, and observed that her conversation put him in mind of the deceased Lord Mansfield. And as for Amelia, she is quite a little goddess! Whenever I talk to the Sergeant of a lady who brings up her family properly, I quote Mrs Gently, I can assure you."

"You may quote Mrs Gently as often as you please, my good madam," said the husband and father, much flattered by the compliment, "but we must not have my plain homely girls called goddesses and Lord Mansfields. And now I must say good morning. Oh! allow me to introduce you to my young friend Mr Elvington. He goes to the bar, Mrs Bellows."

"All gentlemen of talent do," replied Mrs Bellows (with a wink to her husband, which perhaps reminded him that a little dexterity might bag a hundred guineas with a pupil); "but, in the Sergeant's opinion, their future success depends entirely upon what gentleman's chambers they happen

to read in. My father takes great interest in the pupils of Mr Bellows, for instance ; and his countenance in court is generally considered worth having."

" I have not the slightest doubt of the fact, Mrs Bellows," said Mr Gently, rather embarrassed, " and, when the proper time comes, shall advise Mr Elvington to read twelve months with some sound common lawyer ; but what my friend requires just now is the run of a large library."

" A large library, without the owner's advice how to use it, will do Mr Alvers more harm than good," retorted Mrs Bellows, sarcastically, and probably from interested motives ; but yet not without good sense in the observation.

" Neither library nor—hum—ha—advice shall be—um—ha—withheld from the friend of my excellent client Mr Gently," said Mr Bellows, with professional dexterity (for the learned gentleman soon saw how the wind set). " Mr Adcocks is welcome to my books—welcome to my chambers—welcome to my professional knowledge—welcome

to my interleaved copy of the Law of Private Pumps—and, in due time and season, welcome to my drawing-room, with its—hum—ha—its goods, chattels, and appurtenances. Run in and out, when you please, Mr Adcocks, and let us see whether you will read harder than Mrs Bellows does.”

And here the learned gentleman grasped my hand with intense fervour, while he bowed Mr Gently respectfully out of his office. I noticed a quiet smile, perhaps one of gratified self-importance, playing across the lips of my legal friend; at last, he turned to me, and said in a pleasant voice :—

“ A sound man, that Mr Bellows, is he not?—and very careful before he risks his opinion. I suppose that is your conclusion as well as mine, Mr Elvington ? ”

“ Very careful, indeed,” was my reply. “ He seems to be reluctant to risk his opinion at all.”

“ Oh, that is always the case, my good sir, with these deeply-read lawyers,” answered Mr Gently ; “ but when you do get their decision, it is worth

the waiting for. Want of judgment is not Mr Bel-
lows' fault. He is too diffident, perhaps, and so
friendly and open in his manners, that one almost
at times feels inclined to put him in mind that there
is such a thing in existence as the Etiquette of the
Bar. Ah, Mr Elvington, remember when your
time comes to deal with solicitors, that, in your in-
tercourse with them, you always maintain the Eti-
quette of the Bar."

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER he had thus duly impressed upon me the importance of my advancing and maintaining the dignity of the superior branch of my profession, as far as it might be in my power to do so, Mr Gently cordially bade me good morning, put his arm into that of a stray solicitor he just then picked up, and returned to Bedford Row. Somehow or other, I took a wrong turning, and found my way into Great James Street, where, of course, I had no business; but, when once in that quiet neighbourhood, I was reminded, by several placards hanging in dingy open doorways, that I should want apartments somewhere thereabouts, and therefore went up many

dirty pairs of stairs in succession, but was always sent down again by the simple fact of being asked a little too much rent. I found also, that if I took chambers at all I must avail myself of the services of some aged poor relation of the landlord, who was put into the basement in order to prey and raven upon the bachelor inmates. During my first year at Cambridge, I had lived in the College, and had unpleasant recollections of how my bedmaker used to stroll in and out of the gate of the Great Court carrying a large basket with a few coals and candles or "just a morsel of tea and sugar" in it. It is true she did sometimes run against the wife of the Master; but then she always curtsied very low to her, and allowed the good lady, who in her early days had been the domestic member of a large family, to worm all the tittle-tattle of the college out of her, and so her little delinquencies never came to the Doctor's ears. Now, I thought it too bad to be plundered over again at seven and twenty years of age, and when I had no cash to spare, and therefore determined to

put my head into furnished apartments. Turning up a street leading into Holborn, where I recollected there were several courts full of private houses, and crossing over the way, the first gateway I entered was Thavies' Inn ; but folks seemed prosperous there, for there were no apartments to be let. Then came Bartlett's Buildings, a range of houses which had seen their best days in the world ; but the place was just then receiving a colony of working-jewellers, and seeing no cards in the windows, I determined to try my luck elsewhere.

However, on going out of Bartlett's Buildings, my eye was caught by a little pasteboard cut in a diamond shape, with the information upon it in a genteel female handwriting, that "Apartments Furnished" were, I concluded, to be let. I had almost passed the house, for the diamond hung in a bashful manner in the window, and seemed to dodge behind a wire-gauze blind as if ashamed of exposing itself upon the errand of letting apartments at all ; but, being the "High contracting party" seek-

ing apartments, I felt none of these qualms, and knocked and rang at the door, and had to knock and ring a second time. At length, in answer to my third time of asking, which was rather decided, a tall and dirty female-servant, with a black cap on her head and her boots unlaced, came dubiously to the entry, holding a large brass candlestick out in her hand as if she designed to make me a present of it in the open street. On seeing a gentleman at the door, she looked sulky, and, without waiting to be accosted, told me, "Mr Foggletons was out seeing a patient, and that I ought to have rung the surgery-bell." This elliptical address reminded me that I had been looking for the last few minutes upon a brass plate, by no means a clean one, which bore upon it the name and professional designation of "Mr Foggerton, Surgeon," &c.—and that the dirty wire-gauze blind below the diamond informed the poorer part of the sick public that "Patients received advice gratis between the hours of ten and eleven o'clock every morning." But as I did not wish to have a tooth drawn, I declined ringing the

bell, and called the girl's attention to the diamond. The servant, who was evidently slow of intellect, seemed suddenly struck with an idea, and at once acted upon it; for having asked me into the passage, she bolted into a back-room, which, from the smell of stale drugs coming out of it, seemed to be the surgery, deposited the candlestick on a table there, and then ran heavily down the stairs. I thought I heard her in the lower regions holding a conference with a female voice, which impressed several details on her memory; and then she came up again, and told me she would show me the apartments, which were on the second floor.

I cannot assert that on entering the front room it struck me as exceedingly well furnished; though it certainly contained a horsehair sofa, some old mahogany chairs, an ancient bookcase with glass doors covered with green canvass, a carpet of undecided pattern preserved under a gray drugget, and a smart library table apparently just new: there was also a queer little sideboard, somewhat resembling Punch in its figure, for it had spindle legs,

and a kind of protuberance hanging down in the middle, and as if to brace up its obese structure and brighten its dingy aspect, a brass railing was fixed along the back of it. These were the useful articles of furniture, and on glancing at the ornamental, I found they consisted of a pair of huge knifecases standing like dumpy sentry-boxes on the sideboard, with a little black old-fashioned nymph standing between them, holding a brass lamp nearly as big as herself. On the chimney-piece, which was a high wooden one, two blue china bottles flanked a cathedral in shellwork, and the tail of a bird of paradise waved over the mummified head of a New Zealand chief, which showed its teeth and looked at itself in a little round bulbous mirror screwed over the sideboard. The maid-servant evidently regarded with great admiration these articles of vertu, for she pointed them out to me one by one, and informed me that they had once belonged to Mrs Foggerton's mamma, a lady of private property, who had retired from a beautiful house at Hackney to a cottage in De Beauvoir

Town, and had lent part of her furniture to her son-in-law.

When I requested to see the sleeping-apartment, the girl's spirits apparently sank : at first I did not see the reason of it, for it was a large airy room, newly painted and papered, and was decently furnished ; except that it was impossible for any one to sleep in it comfortably without some new arrangement with the landlord, in consequence of the absence of a bedstead. What might be the bed itself certainly appeared to be rolled up in a corner of the room and tied round with a cord ; but bedstead there was none, and the vacant place gave the room an uninhabitable appearance. When I called the attention of the young woman to this omission, she seemed very much confused, and said, " I had better speak to Mrs Foggletons about that ;" and leaving the room abruptly, she stumbled down the bedroom stairs to the lower part of the house.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, during which I had an opportunity of contemplating the prospect within and without, Mrs Foggerton herself came

into the room; but very slowly and reluctantly. She was a sallow young woman, rather above the middle height, and might have been pretty, if her face had been fuller and her complexion of a better colour; for she had large languid dark eyes, and a profusion of black hair braided round her temples, set off by a little brown network cap. She was shockingly thin, especially about the arms and waist; and perhaps she might, at one time of her life, have applied the pernicious adjuvament to female charms called tight lacing: but her black silk dress, which was rather faded, being in itself much too tight a fit, probably gave her this appearance. In her manners she was modest and unassuming; she spoke in a low tone of voice, and was evidently abashed at having to come down to let lodgings at all.

When I politely called Mrs Foggerton's attention to the want of a bedstead in the chamber, she at once admitted that it was only reasonable to require such an article in a sleeping-apartment; but excused herself for the omission on the plea that

she had only just moved into the house, and was not quite to rights. "However, sir," said she, "there are two bedsteads in the house not yet put up, and if you take the apartments you can choose which you prefer,—a French polished Arabian bedstead with green furniture, or an iron bedstead with dimity furniture for the winter, and white muslin for the summer—whichever, sir, you prefer."

Now, I knew very well that such people did not buy bedsteads two or three at a time, and I had also seen, at a cheap furniture warehouse over the way, two which just answered the description Mrs Foggerton gave of her own. Yet although I suspected the young married lady of a slight dereliction from the truth, it made no earthly difference to me where the bedstead came from, provided I had one to sleep upon; and as Mrs Foggerton was a ladylike young person, and evidently unused to letting apartments, I felt inclined to get her out of the scrape; so, after due deliberation, I gave a preference to the Arabian bedstead, and said

that I should require no furniture during the hot weather. This brightened the young woman's face up, and we seemed to agree admirably when we took a fresh survey of the other room. On my inquiring the terms per week, Mrs Foggerton, after seeming very nervous, asked such a very small sum that I saw at once that she was in my power, and pitied her ; so, after considering that although the apartments suited me well enough they might have been better furnished, I named what I thought a reasonable weekly rent, and was gratefully thanked by the poor lady : I do believe she would at the time have let me into her house for nothing, merely to put an end to the awkward interview.

“ Indeed, sir,” said she, “ I am exceedingly obliged to you for correcting me in my silly mistake ; for before I married Mr Foggerton I had not the slightest idea that I should ever have occasion to show my own furnished apartments ; but this house is so dreadfully large that we do not know what to do with one half of it—and Mr Foggerton has only just commenced practice ; and young be-

ginners, you know, had better be saving for the first year or two."

I assented to this reasonable proposition, and then finally decided to take the rooms. Mrs Foggerton, evidently much relieved at what she thought the termination of our negotiation, tript down the stairs with a light step, and no doubt a light heart, behind me ; but as she crossed the passage politely to see me to the door, her course was arrested by the dirty maid-servant, who stood planted in her mistress's path, apparently in order to prevent her letting the apartments without settling certain important stipulations, to her (the servant's) own satisfaction. This damsel was not bright certainly, but she had, as I afterwards learned, gone out to place early in life, and had let all kinds of lodgings to all kinds of customers ; she therefore felt it her duty to protect the inexperienced young housekeeper against the mean artifices of an evasive single gentleman.

"References !" said the girl in an admonishing whisper.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," said Mrs Foggerton, very much ashamed, "but a respectable reference is usual in these affairs."

I admitted that it was, and gave the name of Mr Gently. The servant again beckoned her mistress, and whispered for several minutes very impressively.

"I forgot to mention," said Mrs Foggerton, coming back, and looking very unhappy, "that in the winter we ought not to charge less than sixpence per scuttle for coals. We really have not a coal cellar in which we can accommodate you."

As I had no wish to be accommodated in a coal cellar, I replied that I thought sixpence the usual price, and would pay it.

"Attendance we give in, sir," said Mrs Foggerton, recognising an energetic nod from the servant, "but if you have company, and Diana waits upon your friends, you will have no objection, I trust, to pay her eighteenpence for the extra trouble you give her."

I was never hard upon a servant in my life, so made no demur to this new attack upon my purse.

My acquiescence evidently made Mrs Foggerton very happy : perhaps she was in dread of a severe reprimand from her servant if she overlooked the interests of the kitchen ; while at the same time she would have sunk into the earth had I spoken rudely or sharply to her. She therefore insisted upon opening the street door, saying, as I thought rather grandly, “ One word more, sir, and we are quite arranged. Mr Foggerton being a medical man, the night-bell sometimes rings when he is called up to attend a patient ; and, as it rings into the bedroom just under your own, it may disturb your rest : I should not wish you to reproach me for not having mentioned it.”

Now, I should certainly not voluntarily have selected my sleeping-apartment over a room in which a doctor's bell was ringing six nights out of the seven ; but I had seen enough to convince me that Mr Foggerton's practice had not suddenly grown so extensive as all that came to. I waved the objection then, and shook hands at parting with my new landlady ; whom I left in a fine flow of high

spirits, talking and laughing with the servant as if she had been her own sister, and in all probability congratulating herself on her sharpness and shrewdness in ensnaring a single gentleman into taking her apartments.

CHAPTER XV.

As the subjects of the Sublime Porte displayed more eagerness than ever to take forcible possession of the upper part of the house in Suffolk Street, I determined to get quit of my rogue of a landlord forthwith, and therefore removed to Bartlett's Buildings the next morning. In the arrangement of my few effects I was assisted by the slow-minded maid-servant, who appeared to consider the occasional eighteenpence a fee of retainer. She frequently treated me to a little familiar conversation, and on these occasions was eloquent on the grandeur of Mrs Hicks, Mrs Foggerton's mamma, and of Miss Cornelia Hicks, my landlady's only sister,

who, she said, "was as beautiful as an angel." Of Mr Foggerton and his professional skill the girl spoke rather slightly, tossing her head scornfully at the mention of him, and saying, "He shouldn't lance even the gums of a babby of hers, if he did it for nothing in a derspensatory." She brought me up stairs during the day many polite little messages from Mrs Foggerton, who hoped that I approved of the Arabian bedstead, offered to be of any possible help and service to me, and always wound up with the assurance "that I might command her;" but as Mrs Foggerton, with all this civility, kept carefully in the background, and I suspected domestic activity was not her forte, I left the office of commanding her to the proper person, Mr Foggerton, and went on with my arrangements, assisted by the servant. The girl called her mistress a martyr, and seemed to pity her, and to infer that she would rise a loser from the speculative game of matrimony: for a game of speculation many nice young ladies make of it.

I had been in the house about a week, and was

lying one evening on the sofa, jaded to death with an imaginary interview I had just been honoured with by old Cardinal Lambruschini in the Vatican, when the slow servant came into the room, and said abruptly, that "Mr Foggletons was at home, and would be happy to speak with me;" and before she had time to request him to walk up, there came a rap at the door, in playful imitation of Berkeley Square footmen. In obedience to my reluctant "Come in," Mr Foggerton, who had followed the servant up the stairs, introduced himself; and who should he turn out to be after all but the young medical man who spoke so well among the "Peaceful Revolutionists." However, on this occasion he had really made himself up in the approved undress of a general practitioner in his studious hours: he had brushed the hair out of his eyes, turned up the sleeves of his dressing-gown as if he had just been mixing pills, and carried Turner's Chemistry in his right hand, bringing it up with him, as it were, in a fit of abstraction. But when he discovered who his lodger really was, he relaxed into a spasmodic

sort of hilarity, and fenced at me playfully with the book, protesting "that none but the best fellow on earth would have taken his apartments; and that, now two Peaceful Revolutionists were under one roof, they would amend society to the state of a large normal school, and that he should have no more police rates to pay for Bartlett's Buildings in future." I was not sorry on my part to have Mr Foggerton for my landlord, as I had formed rather a good opinion of the man from his speech at the club, and thought him a clever fellow, so I begged him to be seated, and asked him to spend an hour with me. He said he would sit down for a few minutes, but must then be off like a rocket, for he had a few rounds to make; however, he would stay with me just five minutes.

"Elvington," said Mr Foggerton (for he soon grew familiar with people), "the morning you took our apartments was a bright day for me as well as for Mrs Foggerton. My little wife is a gentle sylph-like thing, and base is the man who would impose upon her trustful confiding nature. Now,

lodgers sometimes come that dodge. As for myself, I will not disguise from you that I am just now labouring under the feeling of a want of proper professional appreciation, and what I require above all things in my moments of depression is sympathy—yes, sympathy.”

As Mr Foggerton here thought fit to pull a very long face and slap his forehead with Turner’s Chemistry, I put in a word of encouragement for him, and suggested that perhaps his abilities were better appreciated than he imagined.

“Well,” rejoined he, “I do get into some practice in the neighbourhood, certainly; but it is a low style of art,—scarlet fever, measles, and so on. All the beautiful operations about here go into Bartholomew’s; and as for insanity, I never met a case insane enough for the party to come to me,” and here he laughed at his own thin joke. “But this brings me to the occasion of my visit, if that deuced slow coach the slavy has given you the right message. It is partly to congratulate you on the honour of lodging with Mr Fog-

gerton, surgeon, &c., and partly to express my hope that you have not been annoyed by the run of my practice: which, for the sake of you and Mrs Foggerton, I keep as quiet as I can. (This he certainly did, for it did not run at all). I do hope you have not been annoyed by the night-bell. It rang so loud the other night that I almost expected the bodies would wake up in St Andrew's churchyard and protest against the disturbance.

I thought this a forcible image, but did not admire Mr Foggerton's style of wit, and therefore answered coldly, that his bell had not annoyed me.

"You didn't hear it then?" inquired he.

I replied that I did not.

"Then," said he, rather vexed, "the seven sleepers of Ephesus took a short nap to yours. Why, half the windows in Bartlett's Buildings were up, and the heads out in their nightcaps. A solicitor's wife in Hatton Garden was confined—a fearful case for such a young hand as I am. By coolness and dexterity I saved the mother—lost the child,

of course. Puerperal fever has ensued, and if the poor lady slips through my fingers, all the people will say I have mismanaged the case."

During this tragical account of a bad case (which I did not believe), I looked very hardly at Mr Foggerton more than once; knowing very well that his night-bell had not rung since I entered his house, and that the whole narrative was a trumpery lie. And yet the man who behaved in this barefaced manner had made a speech the other evening which convinced me he had studied an arduous profession very diligently. But probably he felt that he could not succeed in it without a certain amount of paltry puffing; and as I had myself just had an imaginary interview with Cardinal Lambruschini in the Vatican, I knew that the misery of inventing a falsehood was by no means lessened by a conviction of the necessity of drawing upon one's invention for daily bread.

I felt sorry then for Mr Foggerton, and in order to save him from any more falsehoods, turned the subject of conversation; congratulating him on

his speech at the club, observing that, although not a scientific man myself, it appeared to me to display learning and ingenuity, and that I anticipated that some day or other he would rise to be a lecturer at one of the hospitals. This kindly encouragement, though well meant, did not produce the effect I intended, for Mr Foggerton frowned dismally, and looked ready to cut up and dissect the whole body of hospital surgeons there and then.

“Alas!” he cried, “Elvington, you are the best of human creatures, I see; but that pill won’t go down. Not that I should complain of standing my ground like other men—so long as I have any ground, in a pecuniary point of view, to stand upon; but I doubt and mistrust myself—my feeble, vacillating self. Who can do justice to a man who will not do justice to himself? Some people are mere bubbles, but then they rise to the top before they burst; others burn like potassium and then go out. Some, again, cannot keep in chemical admixture with the world, but the moment you

throw in a test, down they go to the bottom. Now, the one set of men are great in their day—look at Sir Astley and the muffs who deliver the Hunterian orations—but are forgotten in the long-run; while the others, never having been known to fame, have not the pleasure of being forgotten at all. I have the gold—dull ore—in me, I know, but I would change it for its value in professional brass any day in the week. No—I am unsteady and vacillating, and had better swallow my own prescriptions (here he laughed hysterically) than run the rigs I am running at present.”

Mr Foggerton added, that when this view of his own case stared him in the face, he felt as dismal as vacillating people generally do, and that it gave him a bad headache, not from repletion of the vessels, but from anæmia. On these occasions he found a glass of brandy and water and a mild cigar the best prescriptions in his pharmacopœia—the former a stimulant, the latter a sedative; and here he looked rather intensely at the corpulent side-board, as if calculating what it contained. Being

weary myself with the day's labours, I summoned the servant, and, without paying any attention to her frowns behind her master's back, ordered tumblers and hot water. I gave my landlord his choice of cigars, produced some prime cognac, and allowed him to correct the "anaemia" of his constitution as much as he deemed it judicious. He sat with me about two hours, and I found him an entertaining companion, who did not tell more professional crammers than many medical men much older than himself sometimes treat themselves to. At last he remembered his wife, who, he said, was in a weak state of health, and had been sitting alone in his dull professional parlour all that time.

"By the by, Elvington," said he, in rather an embarrassed tone, as he rose reluctantly from his seat, "you will soon become intimate with my little angel, and will appreciate her society as much as I do. When we are all three spending a cozy evening together, we shall talk about various subjects and various people, and the club of the Peace-

ful Revolutionists will of course turn up in some shape or way. Would it be asking you too much to bear carefully in mind that I *did* belong to that club, in a past sense only—you understand me, you gay, happy, single man?"

"I do, Mr Foggerton," replied I, rather significantly; meaning to administer a little rebuke to the matrimonial delinquent.

"My profession," said he, getting bolder, "takes me out amazingly, especially in the after-part of the day—too much for a man who loves his own fireside. Sometimes it is Ely Place, sometimes Fetter Lane—no rest for the wicked. I turn up at odd places, old fellow—the Mitre in Fleet Street is one, and Don Saltero's at Chelsea is another. My night-practice commences at Vauxhall, and will occasionally terminate at Cremorne. I never make a fool of myself in a masquerade more than once in the same month, but can generally be found by a distressed husband in the pit of the Adelphi; for a fat man sits eternally there with his mouth wide open with laughing the moment

Mr Wright shows his face upon the stage. If that man chokes himself, and I bleed him, it may be the making of me. Now, you are a single man, and may sometimes come across me when I am out pursuing my professional practices ; if such should be the case, oblige me, if you please, by not mentioning the occurrence to my dear Maria. She is a woman of a delicate nervous system, and might get excited ; and as for Mrs Hicks, my mother-in-law, she would only be too happy to get up a domestic breeze between us at the shortest possible notice."

My amusements and recreations had, up to this period of my life, been of a more refined character than those among which Mr Foggerton appeared to seek his practice. I laughed, however, at my landlord's ingenuous way of letting me into the secret of his matrimonial delinquencies, and assured him that, of course, I should never make mischief between husband and wife.

"The fact is," cried he, "my professional experience tells me that the atmosphere of Saint An-

draws Holborn is peculiarly depressing ; and that my positive duty to myself—and wife of course—is to seek relaxation. You are a capital fellow, Elvington, and I am everlastingly in your debt.”

So saying, he ran down stairs, leaving the door open. I heard him go into the parlour and kiss Mrs Foggerton, who complained about some grievance—probably being left alone so long. As I did not choose to listen to the young married couple’s private affairs, even by accident, I closed the door, threw myself upon the sofa again, and fell into an uneasy sleep ; in the course of which I dreamed that I went to a masquerade with Mr Foggerton, who was dressed as a polar bear, took his head off in the middle of a quadrille, and insisted on treating the Virgin of the Sun, with whom he was dancing, to hot brandy and water.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN the course of a few weeks I became very intimate with Mr and Mrs Foggerton ; for my landlord was not the gentleman to keep his company from any one, and frequently came into my rooms in a friendly way, when he felt languid from “*anæmia*.” Poor Mrs Foggerton was rather frightened at me at first, for, as I discovered afterwards, her husband (who very seldom stated any fact exactly as it stood), after his first introduction to me, amazed his weak and credulous wife, who was a person born to be imposed upon, by informing her that their new lodger was not only a member of the very distinguished club to which he *had* belonged when

a bachelor, but also a first-class classic and wrangler from Cambridge, and that I wrote the leading articles for a powerful daily political oracle. This veracious statement made a great impression upon Mrs Foggerton, who, at our next interview, told me that "really I frightened her so, that she was afraid to look and speak before me ; and that literary men were generally dreadful quizzes." However, a little timely flattery respecting her personal appearance, and the daily information of the slow servant (who generally praised me even to the milkman, in order to contrast Mr Foggerton disadvantageously), calmed the lady's trepidation, and in time I became her friend, and even confidant in her troubles.

The more I knew of this young couple, the more I pitied them. It puzzled me to know what they meant to do in this world, in order to scramble through it. Really the best thing they could do, as merely regarded their prospects here, seemed to me to be to catch one of the fevers always raging in the neighbourhood, and get out of a state of

things which had apparently not been constructed entirely for their accommodation. Mr Foggerton's night-bell and day-bell never really rang : he had no practice out of doors ; nor did he deserve any. During his apprenticeship, and while walking the hospital, my landlord had studied his profession very diligently, knew the sciences which bore upon it better than most general practitioners, and had been highly complimented upon the examination he passed at the College of Surgeons. Had he after that been immediately patronized, put at the head of a large hospital full of patients, and eulogized every week in the *Lancet* and *Medical Times*, the overwhelming pressure of his engagements, and the gratification of his vanity, might have kept him steady, and he would have distinguished himself greatly. But he was too fickle and restless to wait in his rambling old house in Bartlett's Buildings, until practice slowly came in ; and, moreover, unless he had some terrible case or fearful operation to gratify his self-importance, would neglect even the patients who came to him ; and as the poor

soon discovered this, they held aloof even from his "gratis advice," and turned their backs upon him altogether.

The little surgery at the back of the house was a pretty fair index to Mr Foggerton's state of mind, for there was plenty of professional apparatus in it, but all in disorder. It horrified the slow-minded maid-servant, who dreaded to go into it, and hated her master for keeping such a place. This wench was as loquacious as she was ignorant, and amused me with her revelations of the dreadful things in the surgery. There was a "skillington," as she called it, hung upon wires, which sometimes terrified her mistress beyond measure; and the cupboard contained, she told me, a poor little babby in a bottle of gin; and a dead man's arm, which her master informed her had once belonged to a celebrated murderer; but what amazed her most was, what she described as "a white crockery man's head, with the hair shaved off, and the multiplication table written all over the top of it." This, of course, was the ordinary phrenological head:

the girl mistook the figures, which referred to the bumps, for a copy of her old tormentor the multiplication table.

When I made acquaintance myself with Mr Foggerton's surgery, the state I found it in made me angry. It was not the quantity of scientific lumber, in the way of galvanic batteries, retorts of all sizes, large sheets of diagrams, and models of ingenious inventions by Foggerton himself—who was always going to patent something and acquire a fortune by it, but never did—but the beautiful arrangements he had made to poison anybody who was fool enough to take medicine from his hands, and that at the smallest amount of trouble to himself, rather annoyed me. Everything seemed in the wrong place: corrosive sublimate had been emptied into the division which was marked magnesia; and oxalic acid stood ready to be made up into a dose as Epsom salts. Oil of bitter almonds looked quite tempting in a stopt bottle labelled Scheele's Prussic Acid; and arsenic stood on the table in a paper bag, so that the slow servant or

Mrs Foggerton might have put it into a pudding for dinner. This carelessness was something like wickedness, and I gave Mr Foggerton the benefit of my opinion ; but he laughed it off, and went away to spend the evening pleasantly at some " professional appointment."

Poor Mrs Foggerton was as hopeless as her husband, and unfortunately for her own peace of mind had some dim perception of the fact. As I knew more of her, she would often bewail to me her husband's want of success, hinting that he did not stick close enough to business ; and complain that she had herself got into a position she never expected, and for which she was not prepared. She spoke almost with tears in her eyes of the quiet life she led at home with her " papa and mamma ;" and said, rather grandly, that she had been too well brought up to make Mr Foggerton the domestic wife he ought to have.

About this beautiful " bringing up" I differed from Mrs Foggerton altogether ; for what had been taught her in the course of her life, except to dress

herself in gay bonnets and shawls, and dawdle about Hackney gossiping with other young ladies who were going to ruin the same road as herself, I never could discover. This poor creature was a type of the mawkish, helpless, ignorant women which the boarding-school system of education has inflicted upon the community in general, and unlucky husbands in particular. She knew nothing about house-keeping, could not price an article at the butcher's or baker's, but allowed them to cheat her before her face. She did not even keep the slow servant in order, but suffered the girl to hector her, and rule the house. She seemed never to use needle and thread ; but even, whilst in want of new clothes, let those she wore hang in tatters on her back. She might certainly have picked up a "trashy accomplishment" or two, for a few music books were lying about her slatternly drawing-room, with "Miss Maria Hicks" in gold letters on the covers ; but as Mr Foggerton could not afford to buy her a piano-forte, I was spared the infliction of boarding-school "execution." Knowledge of books or the world,

or the power of reasoning in a sensible manner, she had none : perhaps, because she was not by nature the brightest of women, married or single. But she was gentle and pliable, and a little more might have been done with her to fit her for a world in which her highest aspirations, of course, had been to incur the responsibilities of a married life.

With such a master and mistress as this, the house went to ruin, and no ordinary lodger would have stayed in it one week. They never seemed to get the breakfast-things off the table, to dine at any regular hour, or to go to bed and get up like the rest of mankind in Bartlett's Buildings. Mrs Foggerton was almost every morning wailing about some insignificant trouble or other ; and the slow servant was either saucy or sulky because she had been reprimanded without deserving it, or from not being called to order when any other mistress would have paid her her wages and sent her about her business. Mr Foggerton became more and more engrossed by his out-door practice ;

and when he returned home, frequently looked as if he had been practising at some tavern : although I must admit he was never very far gone.

The house was so dirty that it was a disgrace even to the not very brilliant neighbourhood in which it stood ; but it would occasionally take a fierce fit of cleansing and set itself to rights. On these occasions, Mrs Foggerton was sure to be in a little fit of helplessness, and kept snivelling from morning to night, while the slow-minded servant tyrannized over her more than ever ; even while she knelt extended on all-fours on the stairs, with a pail of water by her side. In this posture she scrubbed and splashed away to the accompaniment of the popular melodies of the day, which she trolled out in the most exhilarating manner. On these occasions she enjoyed the company of a friend and ally, one Mrs Bungham the charwoman, an ancient female of robust proportions, who wore a black stuff gown and widow's cap, and whose professional residence was Old Boswell Court, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Mrs Bungham generally took her post

a little higher upon the stairs, and surveyed the proceedings beneath her from the summit of a large pair of deal steps. When at Cambridge, I had of course worked some fifty problems upon stable and unstable equilibrium ; but I never could understand how Mrs Bungham, a ponderous woman, kept her poise upon the top of those steps, planted as they were on two descending stairs. Stand on them however she did, with professional ease, holding a large flannel in her hand, which she dipt into a pan of dirty water by her side. She would occasionally sweeten her toil by a dialogue, carried on in a loud hoarse voice, with the maid-servant below, who responded in a cheerful key. The conversation, which could be heard all over the house, was brisk and diversified ; for Mrs Bungham was of a sarcastic and cynical turn of mind, not having found that matrimonial felicity with the late Mr Bungham which she had anticipated. It chiefly related to the births, deaths, and marriages of the two parishes of St Andrews Holborn and St Clements Danes, and the great mistake Mr Foggerton had made in

setting up in Bartlett's Buildings and expecting the poor to come to him for advice. Towards the evening, the noise would subside, and the house, smelling strongly of bees-wax and yellow soap, gradually settled down into its accustomed dimness, and got dirty again in the shortest possible time.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE fact of my establishing myself in Bartlett's Buildings soon became known to my friend Mr Gently. I had given his name to my landlady as my reference, and Foggerton, who always took a vast amount of trouble when it was unnecessary, went round to Bedford Row himself with my card in his hand. Perhaps the medical man had some idea of bagging a patient by the mere dazzling influence of his professional demeanour, for he thought that when he chose he could make up as the steady-going young doctor in first-rate style. Mr Gently, who knew nothing about my connexion with the

newspaper, imagined that I had removed into the legal neighbourhood in order to bury myself in the library of Lincoln's Inn and the literary treasures of Mr Bellows ; or to be near at hand to run round to him, Mr Gently, when a knotty point puzzled me ; for he was rather conceited of his legal acquirements. Bartlett's Buildings, too, although gone down in the world, had never lost a kind of abstract gentility in the solicitor's eyes, for he recollected how, when he first came to London, it was full of leading professional men, whose carriages used to set up and take down their wives and daughters and keep the whole place in an uproar.

Of course Mr Gently communicated my arrangements to his wife, and asked her to agree with him in the conclusion that I was acting very judiciously. Mrs Gently, who had already put me into her good books, agreed that I had done so as far as my judgment went, but that unfortunately I was a very young man to be left alone on my own resources (I was only three years older than Mr Gently had been when he married), and that I

had no mother or sister to advise me. For instance, she remarked, she saw clearly that I meant to shut myself up in Bartlett's Buildings (where poor Miss Penrose, he would remember, died just ten years ago), and read myself into a consumption like Mr Caser, Mr Gently's Junior at the Chancery Bar. Then, too, she said, the woman of the house would no doubt put the sheets on my bed wringing wet, and neglect to shut down the windows in the bedroom, and that she was sure I could never do without little comforts which were not to be got in a lodging-house. These dismal suggestions struck my good friend with some dismay, for he recollected with remorse his own exhortations to hard reading; but he kept this to himself, for there really was no occasion for him of his own accord to give his wife the advantage over him; so he agreed with her in all she said, and told her that I must be coaxed to walk out of London occasionally, and to sleep at Highgate-rise. He observed with a sigh that there was poor Tom's bedroom for me, and as this set Mrs Gently off crying, he

brought her home the next evening a new silver cream-jug to put her into good spirits again.

The staff of clerks in Bedford Row now began to make periodical calls, and to deliver furtive invitations for me without stint. This invasion struck poor timid Mrs Foggerton with dismay, for she was occasionally compelled to open the door to them herself in the absence of the slow-minded maid-servant, who was in the habit of slipping round to the milk-shop in Bartlett's Passage in order to converse with a milkman in a glazed hat and smock frock, with whom she kept company. My landlady, who treated the very beggars and hawkers like noblemen, behaved to all the members of Mr Gently's establishment with nervous respect. Even Mr Simmers, the junior articled clerk, who had not yet cast his professional jacket, came in for a share of her civility; he was generally honoured by a seat in the surgery, where he contemplated Mr Foggerton's chamber of horrors with intense delight, and refreshed his outer man with a glass of stale sherry and a little plate of biscuits,

while Mrs Foggerton brought some message up stairs to me. When, therefore, the young gentleman felt weary of bending his legs under a high stool, and rocking it on the hind feet while he threw quill pens at the other legal young gentleman, he would volunteer to save the time of the paid clerks and carry messages round to Bartlett's Buildings—a condescension which gained him a kind smile from Mr Gently, and the goodwill of the scribes with whom he was doomed to pass the early years of his life.

By degrees I conceived a great liking for Mr Gently, and as for his admirable wife, her kind and motherly ways made me fond of her the very first day I dined at her table. I was, however, poorer, and therefore prouder, than I had been, and stood at first upon a vast amount of ceremony; for I did not feel quite certain that the Gentlys did not intend to patronize me; but in time I got the better of this feeling: and really it seemed like emerging from a dark cavern into the fresh air and mild blue sky to run away from Bartlett's

Buildings and forget the British Lion and its Foreign correspondence in the society of this family.

The place where the Gentlys lived was a pretty one, the very gem of the realms of Cockagne, and pleased was I to scent the sweet breath of the garden as I turned down the green lane and came upon the little villas nestled in their miniature plantations, with the roofs peeping over them, and the walls covered with jasmine, clematis, passion-flower, and other climbing plants. Even now I often see in my mind's eye the trim lawn in front of the house, and the four large stone urns on the terrace full of geraniums, monophyllas, or rich purple and yellow dahlias, according to the season, and the light sunny flower-plot in the middle, with Mrs Gently's graceful standard rose-trees—for she was an enthusiastic rose-fancier—in full blossom blushing over it. Then there was her little collection of delicate exotics, in which she took great pride, just set out to catch the sun in the portico, and hiding the graceful statues behind them. I sometimes fancy I am still in the quiet dining-parlour

with the substantial mahogany sideboard and handsome French lamp standing upon it, looking at the picture of the deceased Vestry Clerk of Warminster and fancying that I should have liked to have known the old gentleman; or lounging before the new rosewood chiffonnière with its marble slab set out with the tall alabaster vases, two or three filigree silver baskets, and several slim little ground glass jars, each one containing a full-grown specimen of Mrs Gently's favourite moss or damask roses.—I remember that there was a collection of nicely bound books at the back of this chiffonnière—Rollin's Ancient History among them—and that if any one took a volume out of the row without leave asked and obtained, it sadly annoyed Miss Mary Ann, who liked to see proper things in their proper places.

How often have I sat on a fine summer's evening in the handsome drawing-room, with its gay ormolu chandelier and bright green damask furniture, looking over the garden at the back of the house, with its smooth pleasant grass-plot and well-stocked

flower-beds. There was a little shrubbery below the garden, from which came a pleasant whisper of waving foliage; and on the right hand you looked over a sloping meadow with a sheet of water in the middle of it, the skirt of Caen wood forming the boundary of the scene. Adjoining was the pleasant library with its French polished bookcase full of solid volumes, and the little table with Mrs Gently's work-basket on it—a piece of furniture sacred from intruders; and in a recess stood Miss Gently's desk—that awful chest bound with brass and ornamented with mother-of-pearl, which closed with a sharp snap, and seemed to contain a host of documents, books of accounts, letters and correspondence: there, too, hung little Amelia's two great coloured maps of Europe and North America, which she studied so frequently.

Well, the scene has shifted, and the green curtain fallen:—perhaps it was better for the actors not to grow gray-headed and peevish in the midst of a pleasant stage. We have all of us played graver parts since then, and some of the

poor minims sleep in a narrow chamber. The Duke of Illyria is there, with Escalus Prince of Verona, and Pedro Prince of Arragon, and the Governor of Messina. Turn down the lights, throw a cover over the front of the dress circle, and call my lord's chariot, and let us get out of this gaudy unsubstantial pageant.—

When I became better acquainted with Mr Gently's two grown-up daughters, I learned to respect the elder one, Mary Ann, very highly ; although she never did, and probably does not now, bear me any good-will, yet candour compels me to speak of her with respect, as an upright and talented woman. She did not resemble that numerous class of young ladies who, just declined from their meridian, and missing matrimony at the age when a girl is really willing to take its ups and downs, turn their backs upon a settlement in life and avoid it. Some of these ladies take refuge in selfish indulgence and indolence, or at best flaunt about the streets in order to pick up shawls and bonnets. Others yawn through a dull spring at some water-

ing place, reading trashy novels, and carrying on desperate flirtations with elderly lady-killers with bald heads and large gray whiskers, who are themselves too selfish and frivolous ever to intend to settle down in life. There is a third and increasing class, who attire themselves in the prettiest sack-cloth and ashes in the world, made in a fashionable style by an Anglican milliner in the West end; or shut their poor fragile bodies up in nunneries in order to forget plain Mary Jones in the seraphic and picturesque Sister Angelica. Others—for fantastic folly has many shapes—busy themselves in worsted-work and fancy bazaars, and “the interesting case” of Chubbardee Chuckardee, the bran new Hindoo convert: with his conversion no one need quarrel, only he will do nothing for his living; not even beat a drum with the palms of his two hands, since Exeter Hall took him up.

Now, Mary Ann Gently was not of any of these classes. She knew that the world had its duties to fulfil certainly; but instead of sweeping the milky way of philanthropy with a ten-feet

refractor telescope, she used her own healthy eyesight, looking at home to see if there were no duties worth fulfilling there. In the first place, she kept up her own excellent education, and superintended that of Amelia. She treated this young lady, who was nearly twelve years of age, a little too much like a child, and put a vast amount of Mrs Ellis, Mrs Markham, and the History of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, into her head ; but she was bringing her up in all respects a well-informed lady-like girl, and did not neglect teaching her many little accomplishments. These duties fulfilled, she had to act as business correspondent, general adviser, and director of her own domestic circle ; and sometimes directed them a little too much according to her own arbitrary conclusions. She was not, however, allowed to direct Mr Gently, her father, at all ; for my dear old friend had taken that task in hand in the very first year of her husband's articles, and could never be prevailed upon to surrender an English wife's lawful prerogative. To sum up, Mary Ann Gently was an admirable, clever

woman, who had taken a dislike to Maurice Elvington, and for that reason may not expect his good word, although he gives it to her.

Fanny—pretty Fanny Gently, as I used to call her when talking to myself in my dismal sitting-room in Bartlett's Buildings—was much better fitted to be the companion of a poor overworked literary man than her strong-minded elder sister. Fanny, who had that bright sunny hair we see hanging about the features of Guido's youthful saints, with fine hazel eyes, possessed just the temperament you meet with in such a complexion. She was an even-tempered little girl, quiet and cheerful, and although she was very happy in society, was not at all afraid of keeping her own company. She had always some little industrious task in hand which filled her spare moments nicely; but she did not fret and worry over it, and make mountains of molehills. She was always neat, and exceedingly well dressed, and doing the proper thing at the proper time, although that might only be planting a carnation in the garden, or singing a new ballad

to a pianoforte accompaniment. She was well read in young ladies' literature, but nothing beyond it; nor was she conceited about it: she only sought her own amusement, and rather avoided Charlotte Elizabeth, Hannah More, and Mrs Ellis, when she could shelve their treatises without getting into disgrace with her mother and sister. Fanny was pure in word and deed, and a picture of happy cheerful health and innocent self-employment. She was a good deal sought after at Highgate, and had broken the hearts of many poetical young swains; but she never put herself forward, or endeavoured to call off the gentlemen from her elder sister: the latter was still a handsome woman, but, to her credit, not at all jealous. Mary Ann Gently was much above that feeling, and rather endeavoured to put her pretty sister forward, while she herself took up a book and retired into the background.

I had many pleasant conversations with Fanny, and got on very well with her; and as I never made any silly attempts to flatter the little lady, she be-

gan to esteem me, and to make me her confidant, telling me what flowers were her favourites, and what books she liked best, and how she thought Mrs More, her mother's great card, must have been a chilling old woman. She was also very eloquent concerning a large piece of work in Berlin wool (a goldsmith's daughter, or something of that kind), over which, she assured me, "she had cried her eyes out, and detested it, and never intended to finish it." She would sometimes, accompanied by Amelia, stroll into the fields with me, and talk about the country and the pretty glades in the New Forest, where she had just been paying a visit. This was all innocent enough, and won the heart of Mrs Gently; for Fanny was her favourite daughter, and, as she took great pains to tell me, greatly resembled herself at the period she first saw Mr Gently: whom she then disliked exceedingly. "Ah," she would say, "those who see Gently now, can never imagine what a conceited young coxcomb he was. I gave him up to my friend Miss Dender, and told her to marry him; but she laughed at his conceited ways,

and so I was obliged to take him out of compassion."

Had I been myself an articled clerk of Mr Gently's, and anxious to make up to one of his daughters, I should certainly have fixed upon Fanny Gently; leaving her sister to be courted by a person of much more decided character than I could ever hope to become.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HAD I been writing a novel, instead of merely stringing together a few passages from the history of my life, I should have been too anxious to propitiate my reader (of course my female reader) to have travelled so far through my story without introducing her to a heroine. A picture without some member of the family of the Vicar of Wakefield in it; a tragedy without an assurance in the fifth act by the dethroned monarch, that "life is a vapour, a fitful dream, and a drama ill played out;" a curate's published sermon without a graceful recommendation of my Lord the Bishop's little tract "On Consistency of Opinion on Matters of Discipline;" and a novel without a heroine irradiating

its pages, are, in the opinion of most people, unsatisfactory and unsubstantial performances.

It is true certainly, that some eminent hands in this branch of literature have contrived to make a bachelor's journey of it almost to the end of their pages; but these are grave old fellows, and knew something of the world—a preparation for fictitious composition that is not regarded as essential by some modern novel writers. There is Miguel de Cervantes, that elegant Spanish gentleman who meets one in Velasquez costume between the orange trees in the court of his mansion, and ushers us with the air of a refined host to a profuse entertainment with sparkling wines. Like Signior Benedick he has ever a jest and a flouting speech for the stately muse of Chivalry, but he woos and wins her all the while. I admit that Saavedra occasionally waxes jocose, and tells, like other elderly gentlemen, a few broad stories to the younger folks respecting his esquire Sancho; but this is mere after-dinner talk, and helps to pass off the walnuts and the wine. Cervantes then takes his poor crazy

loveable old Don a long journey from La Mancha through the Sierra Morena, afterwards to Seville, and then home again, like us all, to a deathbed, without introducing any heroine into the travelling carriage. I grant that he takes up and puts down several dainty creatures by the road, such as the pure and affectionate Dorothea, the stately duchess, and the innocent little thing, "seemingly about sixteen years of age, beautiful as a thousand pearls, with her hair tied up in a net of green silk and gold," who is found by the governor Sancho in his evening circuit round the streets of his island.

Then there is our old knavish friend, Signor Gil Blas de Santillane, whose confessions, truer than the truth, must receive implicit credit; while those of the morbid and distorted mind of Rousseau are to be rejected like the diseased imaginings shadowed forth by Fuseli, as drawn utterly beyond nature. These confessions of Gil Blas I would of my own choice enshrine in the casket of King Darius (which, perhaps, one might purchase for a reasonable consideration of Mr Lazarus the goldsmith), and sleep with

it under my pillow, as Alexander did with his Homer. Aristotle edited Homer, and now the Rev. Mr Variorum is about to edit Aristotle ; and so a less man treats a greater man's remains with indignity. Signor Gil Blas, then, whom, if he will forget low company, we will invite into the drawing-room, for the sake of the legacy left to us by the Licentiate Pedro Garcias, and also that he may inform us whether Don Raphael did or did not carry the rosary and sandals of the dying hermit to the Bishop of Cuença ; and meanwhile let Smollett, with all his good jokes, sit in the kitchen among the footmen and scullions (and he will not improve even their morals)—until Miss Lydia Melford's servant is rung for. Gil Blas, so far from introducing us to a heroine at all, keeps us in very questionable female society, that of Camilla, the actress Laura with her mistress Arsenia, until the very end of his story, as he originally published it. Just as we are bidding him good evening, the jealous rogue certainly brings forward a nice little woman, Antonia, the daughter of his farmer Basil, and introduces her as Mistress

Gil Blas. Lastly, there is our pen - and - ink Hogarth, who in his chastest work amuses us with the "humours" (for mere "humours" these are) of Mr and Madame Mantalini, the domestic ambition of the house of Kenwigs, and the far-sighted sagacity of Mrs Nickleby, many pages ere he thinks of providing Nicholas with a wife, and then settles him down with a mere shadow, Madelaine Bray. If, then, my induction be rigid, the instances lawfully chosen, and three great authorities on the subject have nothing to say against it, I am entitled to slip in an easy style into something very like a paradox, and assert, that great geniuses compound the best novels when they leave out the heroine altogether.

Nevertheless, as I said before, if I were writing a novel, I do not know that I could pick out a better heroine than pretty Fanny Gently. A hero who must marry at the end of the three volumes, might go farther and fare worse. The family is a pleasant one to settle in, and Mr Gently a reputable English father-in-law after the estab-

lished fashion. He is just the respectable elderly gentleman to introduce to one's old bachelor friends,—Cracker of All Souls ; Firedamp, who lost his leg at Waterloo ; Grinder, the double first class at Cambridge, now vicar of Smallclothes *cum* Broadbrim, who has married the great local heiress Miss Plainbody, the girl they operated upon for strabismus ; and Shifty the literary man,—and to say with a quiet smile, “ My father-in-law, Mr Gently,—some gentlemen have met him at my house before.” Mrs Gently also is thought something of at Highgate, where her advice is taken as to measles and the hooping-cough before that of the medical man ; and she has been known to have driven a gaudy shawl, or a bonnet a little too much off the head, out of the church. Sharp Miss Gently is rather dreaded among the young ladies, but the pretty Fanny is a favourite with them all. They call upon her in the morning with bouquets, or a roll of music, to try over that pretty duet together, and write her long confidential letters crossed and re-crossed, from country houses at

which they are visiting, telling her how “ young Mr Traverse seems to mean something,” but they must think about it, “ for it is a painful thing, my dearest Fanny, to leave one’s mamma and papa.”

Fanny Gently, in short, is a universal favourite, and deserves to be so, for she is a quiet, even-tempered, cheerful, innocent daughter of England,—as unlike one of Mrs Ellis’s daughters of England as it is possible to imagine—and any reasonable man will pass a happy life with her. Then—but this is scarcely worth mentioning—Mr Gently has been a careful person, and the vestry clerk at Warminster picked up a few parcels of copyhold, and they report at Highgate that the pretty Fanny will have a little money when she marries. But this is really not worth mentioning; for although every young gentleman, when he first starts in life, tells the other young gentlemen that “ he must and will have some money with the girl he marries,” very few of us, after all, wear the yoke for life from purely interested motives,—not even Loosetongue, who, after being rejected by a young lady possessed of

large landed estate in her own right, rushed off, and married a very nice girl who had not a sixpence, and is a happy husband and father in spite of himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

It may be as well to mention, in this place, that I did not quite intermit my legal studies, but renewed my intercourse with Lincoln's Inn, in order to eat sundry dinners in the hall; which dinners were somehow or other supposed to put a certain amount of knowledge into the head of the diner. Of Mr Bellows's offer of the use of his library, and general countenance, I felt no great disposition to avail myself; having taken a dislike to that gentleman which I never entirely got over. Not that either the learned lawyer or his wife (for she still took an active share in the practice) refused me any assistance or advice, or, whatever might be the real state of

their feelings, showed any want of friendliness when I thought it expedient to give a look in at Chancery Lane. Mrs Bellows frequently gave me directions as to my reading, lent me crabbed manuscripts in the handwriting of her father, and would argue a point of law with me for hours together. I cannot say that her law was always sound ; but it was useless for any one to set the good lady right, as she faced the matter out, and if fairly driven into a corner, would slip from the grasp of the victor, by declaring that “ I might be right, or might be wrong, but that that was how the law stood in Justice Buller’s time ; and as for the Judges of the present day, why they did to the best of their abilities, and that was all she could say in their favour.”

Amongst other little acts of civility, I was compelled, impostor as I was, to accept, with many thanks, a presentation copy of the fifth edition of “ The Law of Private Pumps,” which somehow or other had not gone off briskly of late years ; and I actually sat down with an intention of

wading through it. However, after having read a few pages, I found this legal masterpiece such a bundle of hair-splitting rubbish, that I threw it on to the back of the fire, and spent the evening out with Mr Foggerton. With the Ancient Sergeant himself I was also once politely asked to dine, and should, in all probability, have been enabled to have handed down to posterity some Boswellian reports of the lively conversation of the venerable lawyer, had it not been for the proverbial uncertainty which was the defect of his movements in private life.

On this particular occasion, Sergeant Molehill had allowed his clerk to array him in his best suit of clothes, and was stepping out of the door of his domicile in Lincoln's Inn Fields, when he encountered, coming up the fore-court, two old and cherished friends. One of these gentlemen was no less a person than the Secretary to "Queen Anne's Bounty," and his companion was at the head of "the Queen's Silver Office;" they had walked round, arm in arm, to take Mr Molehill's opinion

on a point of professional antiquarianism. Now the Ancient Sergeant had, even in his best days, relished the society of legal farthing rushlights like these, far beyond that of Lawrence, Jekyll, Erskine, or any other of the great wits and lawyers of the last century ; and, on this occasion, he became so interested in the point under discussion, that he forgot all about his daughter and her little family-dinner. When fairly warmed up, he invited both gentlemen into his library, lighted a pair of wax-candles, ordered two scuttlesful of coals, laid down a dozen of his fine old crusted port by the side of the fireplace, locked the door against his house-keeper, and sat down with the avowed intention of making a night of it. The two legal luminaries were not bad hands at a bottle of wine, and, what with rusty old anecdotes and grim jokes, the whole party got so excited, that towards the end of the evening they agreed to exert their vocal powers by singing an ancient legal glee or catch, commencing with

A woman having a settlement
Married a man with none ;

but after they had howled out at the top of their voices three several times the concluding chorus of

Quoth Sir John Pratt,
In a case like that,
It doth revive again,

the three gentlemen successively slid off their chairs and disappeared underneath the table. The two subordinate members of the Profession retained intellect enough to enable them to stagger on to their legs again ; but when endeavouring to ascertain the state of the Sergeant, they found him, I am sorry to say, perfectly incapable of speech or motion. They unlocked the door, called in his housekeeper, and endeavoured to remove him to his bed-chamber ; but, while they were carrying him up stairs, he revived and committed several acts of assault and battery on all three before they could get the better of him. The good woman, however, who knew her master, managed to lay him on the bed, untied his neckcloth, took off his shoes—as he never wore braces, there was no need to relieve him in that part of his dress—and

then left him to repose ; when, after pouring a torrent of abuse upon her, and giving vent to some of those expressions in which elderly gentlemen in their cups will sometimes indulge, Mr Molehill is supposed to have fallen asleep.

Whether it was owing to this outbreak at seventy-seven years of age, or to the labour undergone by Mr Molehill in arguing a great case in the Common Pleas, in which he divided his matter into sixteen heads, and cited twenty cases to each head—for, in order to drag in as much learned lumber as possible, he not only quoted the decisions in his favour, but those that went right against him, so that the Judges on the Bench did not exactly understand what Brother Molehill was talking about, only they were too civil to tell him so—I really cannot undertake to say, but the Sergeant was seized with a fit in open court, and died three days afterwards. As he was the Father of the Bar, they gave him a grand funeral in the Temple Church, and Lord Chief Justice Gaily, who had never ceased to venerate the man who came out at

the head of the Wranglers at Cambridge in his own year of humiliation, set some inquiries on foot as to the provision he had made for his daughter. He was shocked to find that, although the Sergeant had enjoyed a run of practice in his day, he had somehow or other muddled all his money away, and left nothing behind him but his library and the unsold copies of "The Law of Private Pumps." Mr Bellows, he ascertained also, was not rich; for, although esteemed a sound lawyer, he had no great practice in court: in short, the Judge felt for Mrs Bellows, and thought that he must get the Chancellor to give her husband a lift in his profession, out of respect to the memory of the Sergeant. When the two Law Lords laid their heads together, they agreed that the Bench was out of the question; but that no one could exactly begrudge such an industrious person his Leadership on the circuit: so, in due time, the worthy gentleman was gazetted as Mr Sergeant Bellows, and the scandal of the little bit of jobbery soon blew over.

The first time I saw my friend Gently after this

promotion of his protégée, I found him in an exalted state of mind, for he rubbed his hands when he talked about it, and said gaily :—

“ Well, Mr Elvington, you see that the Bar is not such a bad profession after all. We have done something for worthy Mr Bellows. Really I think that we ought to run round together to Chancery Lane and congratulate him on his promotion. If we do go round to Chancery Lane, Mr Elvington, you must keep a sharp eye upon me.”

“ What, Mr Gently,” said I, “ do you think that they will seize upon you for a Sergeant next? And really they might take a worse lawyer.”

“ Nonsense, my good friend,” said Mr Gently, laughing; “ no, sir, but you must beware lest I am conceited enough to accept praise where none is due to me. I am afraid that in my first interview with the learned Sergeant I shall stand in need of all the modesty I can muster.”

“ And so will Mr Bellows,” I answered quietly, for I had caught a glimpse of the learned gentle-

man since he obtained his silk gown, and thought that his promotion had by no means improved his manners.

“Ah! Mr Elvington,” said the solicitor, “you never did give the Sergeant all the credit he deserves for his candour and modesty. Now, it really would not surprise me if he were to ascribe some part of his good fortune to the encouragement I gave him in early days; but really, if he does forget his dignity and talk in that way, I must remind him that there is such a thing in existence as the Etiquette of the Bar.”

By this time we had reached the little house in Chancery Lane, and were not likely to pass it, for a great deal of paint had been lavished upon the door since my last call there, and letters of portentous proportions informed us that “Sergeant Bellows” lived within. The door itself was opened by Shakely, who now walked on his tip-toes and gave me a patronizing nod, as much as to say that he should be happy to take a pint of stout with me at the Cock in Fleet Street.

After he had ushered us into the outer office, he did not immediately condescend to announce our visit to the Sergeant, but retreated to his own desk and amused himself with the pleasant occupation of counting gold and silver into a tin cash-box. When he thought that he had annoyed Mr Gently sufficiently, the worthy walked jauntily into Mr Bellows' room, and as he opened the door we heard two people talking there, and a prodigious rustling of new silk. On the clerk's return he said coolly that the Sergeant was just going to Westminster, but could contrive to see us for five minutes, and that we had better walk into the room.

That the business in Westminster Hall had come to a stand still just then because Mr Bellows had not left Chancery Lane I did not exactly believe, but at all events when we entered his library there was his portly figure standing bolt upright, and he was pulling on to his shoulders with both hands an ample gown of new silk, which dazzled one's eyes by the gloss upon it, and Mrs Bellows,

who now also rustled in black silk, stood by his side holding his wig, ready to hand it to him, and in a trance of admiration at the majestic appearance of her lord and master. If I were to assert that something like a rude stare from Mr Bellows, and a sarcastic smile from his wife, greeted us as we came into the room, I might not be far out; but about this I did not trouble myself personally, although I was sorry for Gently, who looked rather surprised, if not annoyed, when he discovered that the Sergeant did not intend to speak first.

“I trust I do not interrupt you, Mr Sergeant,” said Mr Gently; “at all events, I will not detain you many minutes.”

“Oh no!—not detain,” replied the worthy Leader; “hum—ha—I am off to Westminster you see. But Mr Shakely attends as usual to the—hum—details of our arrangements, hands me my papers, gives appointments for—hum—ha—*consultations* (a great stress on this last word). The solicitors who—hum—confide their—hum—ha—

client's interests to our hands, will have every reason to be satisfied with the accuracy and punctuality of Mr Shakely."

"I have no doubt of it, Mr Sergeant," said Mr Gently—now beginning to understand what the great man was driving at, and to tell the truth, a little put up and irritated at his ingratitude—"I have not the slightest doubt of it; but my present visit, Mr Bellows, is to Mrs Bellows and yourself, in order to congratulate you respectfully on your elevation to a higher walk in your own profession."

"Exactly, Mr Gently, exactly," said the Sergeant, looking as insolent as even a silk gown well can. "In any other case you would—hum—ha—have communicated with Mr Shakely, as a matter of course. As for this visit, it is—hum—gratifying to one's feelings, but—hum—ha—you will excuse the observation—a little out of course. There is an etiquette in these things—hum—an etiquette—I have already given the usual dinner to—hum—ha—my own branch of the profession, and with

that it is—hum—expedient that all these civilities should come to an end.”

“And most assuredly they shall, Mr Sergeant Bellows,” said Mr Gently, very firmly, “as far as I am concerned. I have now therefore only to convey Mrs Gently’s congratulations to her old friend Mrs Bellows, and to assure her that my wife rejoices in her good fortune as cordially as if it were her own.”

“Mrs Gently’s congratulations,” replied Mrs Bellows, in a dry tone of voice, “afford me the greatest pleasure. I shall always have pleasant recollections of the intimate terms I was *once* on—*once* on—with that excellent lady and her exemplary daughters. I am about to leave London for a considerable period, for I have taken a cottage at Little Hampton, near Worthing, in order to be next door to my intimate friend Lady Barrenmouth, the widow of the deceased Puisné Judge. I cannot exactly say when I shall return, but I trust by that time to have my own brougham and to drive round Highgate-rise in order to leave my card ; but

I am no great hand at paying visits of mere ceremony."

"And until then, Mr Gently," said the Sergeant, thinking that the sooner he bowed us out of his office the better, "we shall occasionally—hum—ha—see each other in the Court of Common Pleas. Mr Elvington, read such books as Molehill's Pumps night and day, and when you really are called to the bar, give me a look in, and—hum—let me know of what possible service I can be to you. Good morning, Mr Gently. You will excuse me I am sure—excuse me for bringing this interview to a close. Such an old established practitioner as you are will of course recognise that there is—hum—in these cases such a thing as—hum—ha—the Etiquette of the Bar!"

Mr Gently had up to this time maintained his dignity, and was determined not to be bowed out of the great man's room until he thought proper to take his departure; but the moment the conversation assumed this turn, it was evidently all up with him. He had been preaching up the Etiquette

of the Bar all his life, and now he found out what an inflated insolent man like Mr Bellows understood "the Etiquette of the Bar" to mean. A person of real dignity and importance, like Lord Chief Justice Gaily, might have construed it differently, but this surmise was no great consolation to Mr Gently just then. He made a cool bow, therefore, to Mrs Bellows, walked out of the study in silence, put his arm within mine, and did not utter five syllables until he was quite certain that we had left Chancery Lane in the rear of us. When he broke silence he just observed to me that "I might live to see Sergeant Bellows on the Bench;" but I never heard him mention the learned gentleman's name again during the whole of our subsequent intercourse and acquaintance: nor did he afterwards speak in such glowing terms of admiration of "the Etiquette of the Bar."

CHAPTER XX.

TIME soon heals our bruises, even those of hurt pride, when we have the consolation of reflecting that the persons who inflicted the wound are worthless or ungrateful—or both. Mr Gently, then, in all probability soon forgot that there was such a couple as Sergeant Bellows and his helpmate in the world, and allowed Mrs Gently to engage him in a kind of domestic stratagem, which that good-natured lady had planned for the use and behoof of Maurice Elvington.

To explain myself more clearly, I will just mention that it was about this period of our ac-

quaintance that I noticed a certain change in the conduct of the worthy solicitor and his wife, whenever I happened to be alone in their company or closeted with either of them. Mr Gently, who became more fatherly in his manner than ever, would talk very confidentially when we were in the little library together, and let me into his private affairs. He would tell me how he had lent a few hundreds out on a good mortgage, or when he received a bonus on his gas shares. He would then talk of the early professional labours of his deceased partner, Mr Rackham, and observe complacently that he had himself brought the practice into such a quiet state, that the next comer might go to sleep upon it. He sometimes would forget himself, certainly, when he dwelt upon the legal beauties of the great case of "Cockroach and Salmon," or exulted in the glories of the English Bar; but if Mrs Gently were present, she would frown him down in two minutes. He would then, perhaps to save himself from a curtain lecture—for curtain lectures married men must have—tack

right in the teeth of the wind, and lament the uphill work of a barrister's life, observing how many a fine lawyer who commenced his career with vague aspirations after the woolsack, felt happy in his old days to subside into a County Court Judge.

Then motherly Mrs Gently—who had brought her work into the library, because she said the girls laughed and talked a great deal more behind her back than when she was with them—would inquire if I found that nasty reading agree with my health, and say that many foolish young men worked themselves to death in the Temple or at College, and all for no earthly use; and no doubt her poor Tom, had he been living, would have been as wilful in some way or another. When his son's name came up, I always knew what Gently would say next, for he would express his bitter regret that his fine connexion should go to a stranger; and would relate how many instances he had known of the sons of baronets, retired Lieutenants in the navy, and so on, who had just taken their articles and stepped into some of the first legal practices in London. He

said such men seldom made good lawyers in the legal sense of the term, but that they brought a largeness of mind and knowledge of the world to bear upon their profession, which rendered them excellent advisers in family affairs. He added that no partner could reasonably expect a gentleman who had moved in a higher walk of society to attend to mere details or to undertake any drudgery, which of course could always be purchased of a clerk at the rate of a little kindness and a hundred a-year salary.

If I happened to find myself alone with Mrs Gently, that good lady was sure to begin by laying down many general axioms upon the education and bringing up of a family, and sometimes talked sagaciously concerning prudent and imprudent marriages. From this she made an easy descent to her own daughters : for she did not trouble herself about making one part of her conversation glide smoothly into another. Of her eldest daughter, Mrs Gently spoke with the esteem she merited, although she asserted that it was impossible to convince her in

an argument ; but she liked best to dwell upon the good looks and amiable temper of her favourite child. “ If I were a gentleman,” she would say, “ a very pretty girl would take my fancy more than a handsome one ; and I should choose out of a family which had been well brought up, and select a young lady whose mother had not been above teaching her to be domestic. Then a little money is not to be despised, Mr Elvington ; although silly young men will not admit that they set any value upon it. My poor father was a careful man, and I did not come home to Mr Gently without bringing him a few thousands ; and he found it very convenient to furnish with, and to pay little odds and ends, while Mr Rackham was alive and gave him only a small share out of his business.”

I was not such a very juvenile student of domestic politics as not to see through the artifices of my delightful old friend, although no doubt she imagined she was weaving a thread of gossamer round my freedom ; but notwithstanding her dexterity, I did not view altogether with complacency this plot

by a middle aged couple to turn the nephew of Sir William Maurice into their son-in-law. Even if I liked Fanny, I did not choose to be wheedled into forming any permanent connexion with the little girl unless I pleased; and although no doubt she had affections to engage, I had really as yet taken no pains to ascertain whether I should ever become the object of them.

This last reflection was no pleasant one, for I felt that it would cost my pride no little before I persuaded myself to marry Fanny at all; and if, after I had taken the pains to compel myself to come down from my lofty stand in order not to blight the affections of the pretty creature and ruin her peace of mind for ever, the little lady had civilly turned round and told me "that she could esteem me as a friend, but never love me as a husband," I should have rushed off into a lunatic asylum the very next day. I thought then that there would be no harm in beating about the bush a little, and ascertaining whether I had really made any progress in winning her heart; and

Fanny, who, open as the day herself, never took the trouble to avoid the artifices of any one else, soon gave me an opportunity.

We were sitting one evening in the little library—Fanny, Mary Ann, and myself. Miss Gently was occupied at her writing-desk, making up her accounts; for she was a great accountant, and kept little books of all sorts and sizes, with a regular army of lead pencils mounting sentry inside their leaves, ready to clap down an item at the shortest possible notice. She kept all the family books, the butcher's book, the laundress's book, the baker's book, the disbursements upon Amelia's wardrobe, and that young lady's growing account with the Bloomsbury Savings Bank. Then she was the female secretary to several ladies' charities, and had to disburse large sums on account of them, besides collecting the weekly pence from refractory parents who did not care to send their children to the infant school, or if they did, thought paying for them disagreeable. Mrs Gently was in the garden—for it had turned out a plea-

sant summer's evening—watering her roses and picking the dead leaves off them, with Amelia to help her. Mr Gently had dined that day at his office, as he was getting up the briefs in a Chancery suit. Fanny was sitting at the library window with a large frame before her, in which she was counting the stitches of the great performance in Berlin wools which she never intended to finish. The writer of these pages had seated himself opposite to Miss Gently and next to Fanny, thinking what a pretty girl she was, and how the little gold chain round her neck made it look very white and delicate.

“Why, Miss Fanny,” I said, “if you really work so diligently and talk so little I shall think you are going to run away from us, and shall ask leave to call as a bachelor friend and admire your cottage and pretty new furniture.”

“Well, really Mr Elvington,” answered Fanny, “you can talk very absurdly when you please, but I never heard you say anything so incomprehensible as that. What has my counting the stitches

of this detestable piece of worsted work, which I never will finish," said she, pouting very prettily over it, "to do with what you have been talking about. You may be very clever, but what you say is quite beyond me."

"Why, I have been just looking at the portrait of this young lady," returned I, "in last year's Book of Beauty, and I see that she is embroidering at a frame, or drawing, or something of that kind; and when I read the story, I find that she is thinking of what I have been accusing you of thinking about, and two pages farther on it comes to an end in the old established fashion."

"Well, I hope," replied Fanny, laughing, "that I am not like any of those elegant young creatures in the Annuals, for they are all dreadfully out of drawing: the heads are too heavy for the bodies, and the eyes too heavy for the faces. But give me the book; I will see what your young lady is thinking about: it is not anything about such a person as Mr Elvington, I can undertake to say."

"You cannot despise Mr Elvington," said I, as

I handed her the book, "more than I do myself, and therefore we shall not quarrel on that subject," (and I really did rather despise myself at the time for talking such nonsense, and for the motive which tempted me to do it.)

"Oh," exclaimed Fanny, after reading a few pages, "this is a very nice young lady indeed you have made choice of, and I only hope that, after she has married you, she will make you miserable. She runs away from her papa and mamma, and marries against their wishes ; and if a girl does that," said she very earnestly, "who has a good mother and kind indulgent father to consult, she deserves all she meets with, and has no right to complain if her husband ill-treats her and runs away from her to America."

Just as Fanny said this, Miss Gently, who could listen to a conversation and add up a page of accounts at the same time with the greatest ease, closed the rosewood writing-desk with a pretty loud snap, and turned the key in it with great firmness and precision. "We are beginning to talk about

getting married in our family," said Miss Gently ; " and I suppose, as Fanny and Amelia grow up, we shall hear a little more about it. As for me, I feel quite an old lady already ; and besides have my poor railroad women to attend to and keep out of mischief. If either of my sisters," continued Miss Gently in a decided tone, " makes a good choice, and marries in her own station of life, and not above it, I am sure papa will throw no obstacles in the way : and it will be my sister's own fault if she is not happy ; but then she must be prudent and cautious, and take time to know a person's temper and character before she allows him to gain her affections. If young Mr Sadgrove, now, who comes up so often to see papa and ask his advice, should get on in business, and should take a fancy to either of my sisters, I am sure he would make her a good husband ; and solicitors' daughters, you know, like nothing so well as to marry solicitors themselves. I am not quite sure that if one of those two stout old gentlemen in Gray's Inn who dine with my father when he gives his bachelor parties, were to

make me an offer, that I should refuse him, stupid old lady as I am growing."

"Who is that," asked pleasant Mrs Gently, coming into the room, and looking very much pleased, (she might have overheard part of the conversation,) "has got among my little girls, and is putting mischief into their heads? If I find out who it is, I shall forbid him the house, and get Mr Gently to write a lawyer's letter to him."

"Why, it is Mr Elvington, mamma," said Fanny, "who is talking in the most ridiculous and foolish manner possible, and I am telling him (tossing her little head) that I shall not be stupid enough to listen to him."

"Well," said Mrs Gently, "in your poor grand-papa's lifetime, Fanny, I was a stupid young creature myself, and allowed my father's articled clerk to say a great many ridiculous and foolish things to me. And I don't know," added she (patting Amelia on the head as she came into the room, and looking on her two handsome grown-up daughters with great pride and affection), "that I have

ever had much reason to repent it. However, I hear my poor Gently ringing at the bell: no doubt he is tired to death with these nasty Chancery suits. So we will have up the tea-urn just where we are, and try to make our two gentlemen pass the evening as well as they can in such a petticoat party."

This little dialogue quite answered my purpose, and I learned all I wanted from it. I was confirmed in the belief that if I were anxious to enter Mr Gently's family I should have Mrs Gently as my friend and ally in the transaction. I was also convinced that Fanny was an amiable little girl, who personally did not dislike me, and was quite willing to be courted and married in the old established fashion, but would not go against her parents for the world. Lastly, I saw at a glance that Miss Gently, who conscientiously desired the happiness of her sister, had doubts about my temper and habits, and thought that I could never reconcile myself to a middle station of life. As for Maurice Elvington, a party to be consulted, I found out that he did

not exactly know his own mind, and must therefore not be dishonourable enough to gain the affections of a pretty innocent girl until he had quite made it up.

CHAPTER XXI.

JUST at the period when the Political Giants who constituted the irregular staff of their favourite Growler were urging upon the Ministry the necessity of its relinquishing power, in order to escape from the condign punishment they had in store for it, the Members of the Cabinet appeared to have come to a conclusion somewhat similar themselves. The two Family Parties which made up the administration had never worked cordially together, except in dividing the sweets of office into a couple of large heaps ; and two of the Leading Members, each representing his own group, came one fine morning to an open rupture. Upon this quarrel between a few elderly gentlemen in a

snug parlour, a total change of opinion in Home Administration, External Relations, Foreign Alliances, Colonial Policy, and Free Trade and Protection, apparently came over the minds of the thirty millions of people making up the population of the United Kingdom. According to our asseveration, "the British Constitution was saved;" in the opinion of our antagonists, "after them came the Deluge:"—the Ministerial Party went out, and the Opposition came in. The leaders of the winning faction immediately set about making themselves respectable, cut all connexion with Chartist orators and Factory agitators, and, above all, wound up their Conservative Palladium, which had never been a paying concern. As for the poor editor and contributors, we were treated, as usual by an aristocracy, with "the thanks of Austria," and shared the fate of the tools of that high-minded government, from Wallenstein down to the hangman Hanau. We were sent about our business without the slightest ceremony; and one poor devil, who was abject

enough to beg for a post in the excise, earned nothing but insult for such a piece of presumption.

Mr Simply, our editor, remained for some time altogether out of commission; for although a safe man, his pen by no means sparkled with brilliancy. He was always exceedingly cordial with me, and I had contracted a kind of friendship with him. I frequently dined with him at New Camden Town, and in time made the acquaintance of Mrs Simply, a clever lady who had been a governess, and his two daughters who were in the same line of life, going into it so early and naturally that they rather liked it. He had also a son, who was reporting for the Daily Press, and keeping his terms in Gray's Inn, a brisk young gentleman, who seemed to have the power of being in two places at once. For some time after the loss of the editorship, he was compelled to accept the assistance of his children; for his was a united family, and the sons and daughters were ready enough to support a parent who had always done his best for his children. At last he en-

tered into an engagement with a publisher to produce a series of school works on history, and they have answered so well that he has no longer any necessity to follow up his literary avocations, save as a mere amusement.

As for my poor friend the Peaceful Revolutionist, he was compelled to "duck and dive about" again, and at last took a dive which caused me to lose sight of him entirely. He sometimes did something rather superior in the penny-a-line way; and in one of his country excursions made to the scene of a railway accident, had noticed, near Watford, a tall square red brick mansion, with about one hundred little windows in it, which had evidently seen better days, for the garden was surrounded by a fine buttressed wall, and in front of it were imposing iron double gates before the principal entrance. This house, which was to be let, impressed itself very much upon my friend's imagination, and he would often calculate in how many years he could make his fortune if he kept a large school in it. When the British Lion was

given up, he rushed off and somehow or other wheedled the landlord into granting him a lease of the premises, which he immediately christened St Swithin's Collegiate Establishment.

Having all the valuable patronage of the said college in his own hands, my energetic friend at once appointed himself Warden and Classical Lecturer—a post he was well fitted to fill in any college. He then created the offices of Sub-warden, mathematical master, second master, and so on. He wrote a long and as I thought rather vain-glorious letter to me, detailing how he was quite weary of being driven from pillar to post for a subsistence, and what grand things he was certain to accomplish in this college. At the end of the letter, he offered me, in a condescending manner, the office of Sub-warden; but as the college was not yet opened, and I doubted whether it ever would be, I returned a civil refusal of the appointment, advising him in a friendly way not to go on too fast: he did not get his Sub-warden very easily, but at last a twentieth wrangler jumped at the bait.

When my friend had filled up the other appointments he sent me his circular, in order that I might see what a good thing I had allowed to slip through my fingers; and I was vexed enough to find figuring away, among the Patrons of the college, clergymen, county gentlemen, and others, whom he had pestered into lending him their names—"Maurice Elvington, Esquire, Cambridge." I wrote angrily to the President then, requesting him not to make use of my name unless I authorized him so to do, but he took no notice of my remonstrance, knowing very well that he had done me a favour when he introduced me to Mr Simply: and I learned a very useful lesson in life, namely, never to accept an obligation from the most friendly of men, if that man happens to be a person not over-burdened with principle.

The governing body of his college being complete, the warden began to look about him for furniture, and literally coaxed several upholsterers into sending it into the place upon credit, holding out some misty assurance that the Patrons of

the college would be responsible for everything. As a last and final stroke (and he thought it a clever one), he applied to a robemaker and tailor at Oxford, to whom he owed a long bill which he had never been able to discharge, and represented to the man that if he wished his old account to be settled, it would only be prudent to help his debtor on in the world. The tailor, who would not have trusted such a slippery customer even for a bachelor's hood, unless he had already owed him money, fell into the trap very innocently, and made one hundred and fifty neat black stuff gowns with trencher caps to match, for the future collegians. Nay, he went so far as to hang them up in his shop and display them to the Oxford Masters of Arts when they lounged in to gossip with him.

The college was next opened by a procession headed by the Incumbent of the parish, and was ready to extinguish Harrow School in a few months; but unfortunately no students ever entered it. The neighbourhood was about the worst in the world my friend could have pitched upon,

and not being in holy orders, he was considered, and that even by the Dissenters, perfectly unfit to teach their sons to write Greek prose and measure heights and distances. These two obstacles to success he had omitted altogether from his calculation, so that when St Swithin's College closed for the vacation and never opened again, the poor Head of the Establishment exclaimed that the world was in a conspiracy against him, and having no commons to eat, ceased to keep his terms in the building himself.

An execution for rent soon cleared out the furniture and collegiate costume, and the London creditors, who were very angry, began to molest the Patrons of the college. These gentlemen soon convinced the tradesmen that they had recommended the college merely, and were not responsible for the break-down in its finances; so the men of business put up with their loss, but took care to make the metropolis too hot for the person who had taken them in. As he was almost starving, the poor Peaceful Revolutionist, who had never intended that any one should really lose

money by him, rushed off in a fit of desperation to Oxford. I believe he had some notion of calling upon the old Provost of St Swithin's, who had befriended him once or twice before, in order to see if he could get him appointed tutor to some gentleman about to travel abroad. At Oxford, however, he fell out of the frying-pan into the fire, as the first person he met in the street was his creditor the tailor, who was in a very fierce temper with him, having not only been swindled out of his caps and gowns, but made a fool of himself among the young Masters of Arts, who laughed at him for being taken in. The incensed tailor pounced upon his debtor, and incarcerated him in Oxford jail, where he remained in a very rueful fit of repentance. Hearing of the man's mishap, I wrote him a letter of consolation, enclosing what little money I could spare for his use; but he was so completely overwhelmed with shame at the disgraceful figure he cut, within the very doors as it were of his own university, that he never wrote me a line in answer.

This was the euthanasia of the British Lion, which gave his last kick in the full blaze of success, and its poor correspondents, among whom I was numbered, were disbanded like a troop of infantry at the conclusion of a peace. I certainly felt rather annoyed at first, but reflection taught me philosophy. I had never relished the companions among whom I was thrown, and my conscience had grown uneasy at the fabrications of the "Foreign Correspondent," with which I was glad to have done. I had lived rather carefully for a newspaper subaltern, and Sir William Maurice's (or perhaps Mr Gently's) fifty pounds was as yet untouched; added to which I had seen so much of the shifting lives of my new friends, that I had learned some of their hopefulness. I had also by this time conquered what one set of observers would call a certain amount of fine feelings, and others false pride, and now went round boldly to the few friends I had left relating to them what had occurred to me, and begging them if they heard of any occupation which it was not

unbecoming of a gentleman to adopt, to let me know of it.—Somehow or other I never could enter upon my private affairs with my friend Mr Gently, although I am sure that he would have served me to the utmost of his ability; and the good man, after a few attempts to coax me to become more confidential, gave the matter up as a bad job, and pressed me no further.

CHAPTER XXII.

THERE are periods in the career of a man when the flow of events is at spring or neap tide with him, neither ebbing nor advancing—times when the ripple for a second sleeps placidly on the strand. Many such pauses occur in one's life, but they are mostly so evanescent that we leave them unheeded; though these are the seasons when thoughtful and prudent men call their vagrant thoughts home, retrace the past, and form many good resolutions—perhaps futile ones—for their guidance in future.

Just such a pause as this occurred in my own insignificant career, and on glancing at the past the retrospect was anything but satisfactory. The re-

collection of my college days, and my idle, careless life in Suffolk Street, reproached me with the time wasted and opportunities lost through indolence and frivolity ; while my late avocations and desultory law studies were not such as to increase my self-complacency. But what struck me most was the change that had taken place in myself. New trains of thought passed through my mind : I was not the same man : my habits of life were altered : fresh associations had supplanted those of my prosperous days ; and I felt that I had descended one step in society at least, and that the result had been a sad loss of solicitude either to regain my former position, or avoid sinking to a yet lower level. Poverty had transmuted me : its chill blast and biting frost had well nigh paralyzed the powers that years of self-indulgence and listlessness had enfeebled.

But the last six months had not been quite thrown away. I had been forgetting much I ought never to have learned, and conning a lesson in the school of adversity out of a crabbed book which I

had almost at last mastered. Necessity had been acting as my schoolmaster, and its severe discipline was trying at first, however wholesome. I really felt very grateful for this rough awakening from the stupor of listlessness, and half made up my quarrel with the world, which, I had thought, had used Maurice Elvington very scurvily.

But here came a question which I did not relish. Why, after all, had I been allowed to reflect whither circumstances were driving me? Reason and judgment are a curse when they only point out to one a lee-shore, but do not give the power to keep off it. If it really was my destiny to walk along the level path of middle life, which I had once looked down upon from the heights above it—if my greatest prize in life was to be the pretty Fanny, and to come to an anchor in a snug haven by marrying the favourite child of Mrs Gently, and subsiding into the Pater-familias of other Fannys and Amelias—why was I forced to recollect that Maurice Elvington had, in bygone days, turned his back on a career in the Commons, and allowed

the jewelled hand of an heiress to slip through his fingers? Was it tempting to enlist as a private for life where I had refused a commission in the regiment, until I had spent my last stiver? Was it a hopeful prospect, that of listening for the rest of my days to my worthy father-in-law's flow of legal talk, and that before a thorough domestication in the little library had really deluded me into a respect for Lord Thurlow's rather dubious political honesty, and transformed the disciple of Mill and Bentham into a legal Paul sitting at the feet of that Tory Gamaliel, Lord Eldon?

Thus I allowed my brain to run on for an hour or two, and then came to the rational conclusion that all this retrospection of the past and divination of the future were so much thought and anxiety thrown away. I said to myself, "Men are the playthings of Circumstance, and she makes us and breaks us as she pleases. Other people may hope to rise or fear to fall, but I who have had my slip off the ladder of life, have somehow or other got over the bruises,

and will not take the trouble or concern of climbing again. Every man enjoys the task of building his own house after his own fancy if it be thrust upon him, but to re-edify your old family residence after a destructive fire is a costly and tedious operation. It is not my own fault that I have been as it were "burnt out of house and home;" but since the conflagration has been kindled for my especial benefit, I will do as Mr Sheridan did when Drury Lane was in flames, "enjoy myself by my own fireside."

Since Fortune delights in thwarting our aims and turning our resolutions upside down, I was not very much surprised at discovering that the moment I had formed a determination to take life easily, my destiny seemed inclined to find work for me again. I had scarcely been a week in this easy frame of mind before I was surprised by a visit from my old friend the barrister in the Temple. On the decease of the British Lion, I had informed him that I was a gentleman at large once more, requesting him, if he heard of any occu-

pation which might suit me, to give me the refusal of it; and he had promised me that he would serve an old friend to the utmost of his ability.

After this, however, I had lost sight of him again, for he was not only a very quiet retired man, but was just now getting on at the bar, and had his hands full of work—that is, he sat from morning to night in one of the courts at Westminster with a thin brief before him, endorsed in a certain action, say “*Smallpiece versus Testy*—with you, Sergeant Bellows,” and there diligently read the newspaper, occasionally varying his occupation by drawing pen-and-ink portraits of some witness or irate cross-examiner on the desk before him.

After a few days spent thus, some signs of a little occupation in his own profession might dawn upon my friend, and he would be required to attend what is called a “consultation,” with the great Mr Bellows, his Leader. This consultation generally took place in the lobby of the court, either for the sake of quiet, or because Mr Bellows wished everybody to understand that he was too overwhelmed

with business to give an appointment anywhere else; and the consultation was for the most part a monologue delivered by that gentleman (who had laid aside his old blandness of manner entirely) in a brisk, off-hand style, to the following effect: "Oh! I recollect—Mr Malland with me—ah—Smallwood and Fustian—Eh?—Plaintiff's Attorney?—Oh! plaintiff himself—Action for fitting up a house—Defendant obstinate—What witnesses?—I see—Johnson, plaintiff's foreman—A safe witness?—Swear anything; plaintiffs' foremen always do, and get the jury against us—Afraid we shall lose it—Can't say—Get hold of the judge and hang it up on a point of law—Best thing, I can assure you—New trial next term—Pay costs of this—Hard case on—Smallbody; but what can we do?—I'll do my best—They're calling on the first cause—I'm in it for the defendant—Good morning—" and so Mr Bellows would disappear under a red curtain, having earned five guineas by the consultation. A few hours afterwards, Smallpiece and Testy would really be called on, and my friend,

after rising and informing the jury that the plaintiff was an upholsterer, and the defendant a gentleman of fortune, would sit down again and relinquish the conduct of the cause to that "sound man," Sergeant Bellows.

However, to resume my narrative, I may state that my friend Malland—he is dead, poor fellow—was the best-natured, zealous person on the face of the earth, and so grateful, that although I had conferred many little favours on him in the days of my prosperity, he did not show me the cold shoulder when misfortune overtook me. He found time, therefore, although it was Hilary Term, to run round in his wig and gown and inform me—in rather a hesitating manner, certainly—that he had heard of something which might suit my views, and he trusted I would accept it.

"It is the old story," said he—"private tuition. I know before-hand how you will answer me: That you have never taken your degree—have no testimonials printed—and so on. Well, I have obviated all these objections, and if you will only

listen to me patiently, I think that you will find it your duty to yourself to accept the offer."

"I very much doubt it," replied I; "but am obliged to you for your kindness, and am ready to hear who is the unlucky young fellow you have been hunting up for me."

"Well," he answered, "the other day in the hall of the Temple, one of our men, knowing that I had been a scholar of our college, asked me to recommend a tutor to him for a young limb of the aristocracy, the Honourable Mr Markham, son of Lord Budesdale. Now you know my temper, and how I like to carry things before me steadily and quietly, so I requested my friend to give me a letter of introduction to the Earl; waited upon the great nobleman myself; and the result of the interview was that I settled the matter. I was resolved to obviate all your scruples before I acquainted you with the offer. And now I expect you to fly into a passion and order me out of your rooms. Shall I open the door beforehand?"

"No," I replied (much vexed, however), "your

friendly intervention is well meant, although no one admires being treated like a child. But as you have taken upon yourself to make this engagement for me without my consent, you cannot feel hurt if I should write to Lord Budesdale and resign it. Is young Markham intended for Cambridge, and do you expect me to grind him up in the orthodox fashion?"

"Elvington," interrupted my judicious friend, "I have made no engagement for you whatever, although you may accept one if you please. I have only informed Lord Budesdale," added he, with a quiet smile, "that you will in all probability condescend to call round at Budesdale House, three times a-week, in order to prepare his son for matriculation—at Cambridge certainly—and that on your own terms. I begin to understand the proper manner of dealing with these mighty people, and find that a little quiet self-assertion makes a great impression upon them."

"But I am the last person on earth," I objected, "to prepare a youth for Cambridge."

“A fellow like myself who was seeking scholarships and other distinctions,” replied my friend, “could not fall into much worse hands, I admit. But this youth is to be what we called at T—— College a parlour boarder, and is, moreover, good classic enough already to sleep through his time there. But he is terribly deficient in general knowledge, his father tells me—coming as he does from some great school or other where they have been picking the Earl’s pocket; and I conscientiously assured Lord Budesdale that I knew the man who would do his best to cure the defect. Come, think the matter over.”

I still hesitated, but after a time replied, “I cannot accept this appointment until I have seen the Earl myself; and, to tell you the truth, advised him to send his son to Oxford, instead of Cambridge.”

“Advise his Lordship as you please, Elvington,” said my friend, with another quiet smile, “and try if you can turn him when he has once made up his mind that young Markham is to go to Cambridge, and that you are the person best fitted to prepare

him for our college. However, you will keep the appointment I have made for you at Budesdale House."

Well—to cut a long story short—I felt that I had no right to throw cold water on the zeal and friendship of a better man than myself, and, after some little struggle with my own pride, promised to call at Budesdale House the next day, at the hour appointed.

I had treated poor Malland in what my conscience still tells me was a very thankless manner, and for the rest of the morning felt chagrined at my folly in allowing him to entrap me into a promise of waiting on Lord Budesdale. To relieve my uneasiness, I hunted up Mr Simply, who, among his other acquirements, knew the peerage by heart, and was just the man to tell me something about this great nobleman.

I found my old friend at home, and he very readily gave me the information of which I was in search; but he rather increased my chagrin by informing me that I had let myself in for an interview with a man of no small political importance.

Lord Budesdale, he told me, was one of the recognised leaders of the Tory party. He had joined Lord Eldon, at the time the Reform Bill was passed, in leading the forlorn hope in the Peers during two desperate struggles, and was one of the few veteran statesmen who would have nothing to do with the new-fangled name of Conservative ; regarding the leader of the party which had assumed the appellation with dislike and mistrust. Simply—who considered every fit of liking and sulking that passed over the features of the spoilt children of our Commonwealth as a matter of extreme importance to the health of the realm—called my attention with great earnestness to the fact that Lord Budesdale had positively declined to fill the post of Chamberlain, or some other gew-gaw office in the new cabinet, and argued from his refusal direful results to the United Kingdom. He admitted, however, that the Earl might have other reasons for declining office just then ; for he hinted, but very cautiously, and as it were looking round the room first, that the late Countess bore the rep-

utation of being a very extravagant woman, so that her noble husband's revenue, ample as was its margin, did not in the opinion of some people, he said, exactly keep pace with her profuse expenditure.

The veteran editor, in addition to his other literary capabilities, possessed that microscopic eye for fishing out gossip and tittle-tattle which some industrious people mistake for a genius for the study of history, and he appeared to have the whole court newsman's reports of Lady Budesdale's receptions—which were grand affairs in their day—at his fingers' ends. I learned from him that the Countess was one of those great ladies who, whilst they were rigidly correct in their own personal conduct, were certainly not inspired by such loftiness of principle as to decline supplying by their presence the court of George the Fourth with just as much respectability and virtue as it could not in this country positively do without. Of course their retaining this rather questionable elevation depended altogether on their falling into the pas-

sion of "the first gentleman in Europe," for pasteboard pageantry and frippery of every sort; and Lady Budesdale was one of the two or three Peeresses to whom the Monarch turned over the whole of the female aristocracy, old and young, composing his court. Almack's was then in its zenith. Those were the days of exclusive coteries and all kinds of quarrels and heartburnings between vain and ambitious women; and Simply told me with great gusto many stories of the petty tyranny of Lady Budesdale, in the days when she was Queen Regnant of the world of Fashion, as the newspapers then used to phrase it.

He also reminded me that, although Lord Budesdale had thought fit to live in a state of dignified retirement since the death of his countess, her beautiful daughter, the Lady Venetia Markham, still retained a kind of vice-regal power over the young Tory aristocracy, and that her name was often printed with due subserviency and admiration in the columns of our own mighty political organ, the *Lion*, where we recorded the quadrilles she

danced with Royal Personages or Foreign Ambassadors, or noted her introduction of the youthful daughter of a Bishop or Baron of the Exchequer at the drawing-room. I rather pleased our Editor then by acknowledging that I recollected the paragraphs, for somehow or other the lady's name had caught my eye and ear, so that I appeared to know more about her than could possibly be the case.

As for the rest of the family, Simply told me that Lord Brockhall, the son and heir, had been a great deal on the turf at one time, but was at present out of the way of temptation, having lately joined his regiment of the Guards, which was then (as an exceptional case, of course) serving in Canada. Of young Markham, my future pupil, he knew nothing, but hinted that no news was good news of these budding scions of the aristocracy, several of whom were just then disporting themselves by appropriating street-door knockers, and performing similar feats of the "Tom and Jerry" sort.

But the information I gathered concerning the noble family of Budesdale—my connexion with

which I felt was calculated to exert an influence either for good or evil over my destiny—did not render me less uneasy, nor tend to allay any misgivings as to my qualifications for the duties of my post; especially as I had gained no knowledge of the character of my future pupil. What a different state of mind was this from that when Maurice Elvington, from the elevation of a high and seemingly assured social position, surveyed the world with calm complacency, as a field for the enjoyment of such pleasures and pursuits as wealth enables its possessor to choose, for the gratification of his whim or the aspirations of his ambition!

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